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## **Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill welcomed**

The Social Tonics Association of New Zealand (STANZ) today welcomed the second reading of the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill in Parliament, saying the Bill was a good example of evidence-based policy development.

As well as making it harder for gangs to produce dangerous and addictive drugs like P, or methamphetamine, the Bill will outlaw the sale of party pills to children, and stop the dangerous practices of a few operators who are consistently causing problems.

STANZ Spokesperson Matt Bowden said while eight million BZP-based products had been sold in New Zealand over the last five years, with no instances of lasting negative effect, the industry had pushed for Government regulation.

“We have been working hard with Government to see sensible regulations introduced to outlaw the sale of these products to minors and to set requirements about the manufacture and labeling of them.

“We are delighted to see the next big step towards these regulations becoming law.”

Mr Bowden said at his first meeting with Drug Policy Minister Jim Anderton he was assured that policy in this area would be based on the evidence, and the input of New Zealand’s Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs.

“This is exactly what has happened and we congratulate the Minister for his approach to the Bill. If every party put their emotions and personal agendas aside and took an evidence-based approach to policy development, we would have far more sensible policy overall,” he said.

The Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs conducted a thorough review of BZP and found no grounds on which to ban it. The EACD noted that prohibiting the sale of BZP-based products could see a swing back towards the use of illegal and dangerous drugs.

“These products were developed as safe, legal alternatives to the likes of ecstasy and methamphetamine. They play an important role in the community and I have no doubt that the availability of these products has saved many lives,” he said.

Mr Bowden said recent events in Christchurch highlighted the need for this Bill.

“There are, unfortunately, a small number of operators in the Christchurch region, who do not value community safety. These operators are exploiting the currently unregulated market and producing low-quality products with alarmingly high levels of BZP, without labels or warnings.

“This behaviour is almost certainly behind recent hospital admissions in Christchurch and this Bill will put an end to these practices,” he said.

“This is a sensible Bill which protects the community while at the same time recognising the value of safe and legal alternatives to dangerous drugs. We hope to see it passed quickly into law.”

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