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Misuse of Drugs Amendment gets industry support

The Social Tonics Association of New Zealand (STANZ) today welcomed a Health Select Committee recommendation for an amendment to the Misuse of Drugs Act that will restrict the sale of substances that have low level psychoactive effects.

The main focus of the recommendation is a substance known as BZP, a significant ingredient in many popular party pills which has an effect a little stronger than caffeine.

The amendment proposes to restrict sale of substances including BZP to people over 18 years old, to restrict retail outlets which can sell them and to require certain manufacturing quality.

STANZ spokesperson Matt Bowden said the late amendment to the Bill included many of the safeguards that the sector had requested, but the industry was wary of the impact of the changes and how the practicalities would be worked out during the transitional period.

“We are glad that the Bill will introduce regulatory oversight to our sector, and we hope that the legislation will be used as intended - to reduce harm.

“There is a thin line between ensuring safe operation of a market people want and enjoy, and restrictions that drive it underground,” he said.

“Pulling these products off the market would create a moral hazard by turning tens of thousands of people to underground supply and far more dangerous substances.”

Mr Bowden said the industry was broadly supportive of the Bill, particularly as it already had a code of practice which included rules such as restriction of sale to those over 18.

“We look forward to officials working with us in the changeover period to ensure that the safety of consumers is protected and that high quality products are able to continue to be sold until the new laws come into effect,” he said.

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