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Sensible legislation on party pills under attack – from within

The Social Tonics Association of New Zealand (STANZ) today said Government plans to appropriately regulate 'party pills' were being undermined by a Government agency working completely in a policy vacuum.

Just two weeks before the Health Select Committee is due to report back on proposals from the Minister for Drug Policy, Hon Jim Anderton, on regulating party pills, the Food Safety Authority is now wading into the issue and circumventing an established political process.

"The NZFSA is advising that BZP products should not be marketed as dietary supplements," said STANZ spokesperson Matt Bowden.

"The industry, the Minister and relevant Government officials have been working for the best part of a year to develop a regulatory regime which provides the right level of control and consumer safety.

"The NZFSA is five years too late on this issue. To come up with this new position just two weeks before the Health Select Committee is due to report is a slap in the face for the parliamentary process and shows incredible detachment from the political decision making process."

Mr Bowden questioned whether the NZFSA had consulted with Ministers in coming up with this position.

"We are nearly in a position where a robust legal regulatory regime for these products is likely to go before parliament and it is unacceptable for the NZFSA to undermine this process. It is not in the best interests of protecting consumers or of coming up with the best result.

"The NZFSA should back off this misguided idea and wait for the political process, and the Minister for Drug Policy, to deliver the most appropriate solution to this issue."

Mr Bowden noted that the report from the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs advised that moves to restrict access to BZP based products may "lead to users of these products seeking more harmful controlled drugs as substitutes for BZP".

"The NZFSA should take note of this recommendation. All along we have said that these products, when sold in a controlled fashion to adults, are of significant value in keeping people away from dangerous illegal drugs," he said.

After an industry meeting today, a substantial legal fund was established to keep the parliamentary process on track.

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