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Police say party pills reducing demand for ecstasy

The Social Tonics Association of New Zealand (STANZ) today welcomed the comment from the head of the New Plymouth CIB, Detective Senior Sergeant Grant Coward, that the use of ecstasy had dropped with the increased availability of party pills.

STANZ represents 85 per cent of the manufacturers, marketers and retailers of party pills. STANZ Chair Matt Bowden said Sergeant Coward's comments were an endorsement of the recent decision to Government to regulate the sale of party pills rather than ban them.

"We lobbied Government vigorously with the argument that the availability of these products reduced the demand for more dangerous illegal drugs and, in doing so, reduced drug-related harm.

"We are delighted that a senior police officer of Sergeant Coward's standing is prepared to stand up and endorse this position," he said.

Mr Bowden said Sergeant Coward's comments were part of a refreshing shift towards a more evidence-based and harm minimization approach towards drug use in the community.

"You don't have to look far these days to observe that the use of recreational substances is popular across the entire community.

"With the realisation that 'even celebrities' use drugs other than alcohol, there is a growing acceptance of the need for a new approach to drug issues that is more focused on reducing potential harm than with punitive sanction," said Mr Bowden.

"Part One of the 'High Times' documentary last night was a reminder that all sorts of kiwis have enjoyed recreational drugs other than alcohol at some time, and the greatest harm to come of it was usually from the long arm of the law.

"Politicians, the police and increasingly the community are becoming aware that providing treatment facilities and options, and ensuring safety, are much more effective solutions than persecution and imprisonment."

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