



MEDIA RELEASE

Parliamentary committee recommends reforms targeting synthetic drugs

Inquiry report released today

30 May 2013

The NSW Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee has come up with a series of recommendations in response to the emergence of synthetic drugs.

Synthetic drugs contain chemicals artificially developed to mimic illegal drugs like cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine. A range of products containing these drugs are available for retail sale in NSW and there has been an increase in their detection and use around Australia and internationally. Many of the chemicals present in synthetic drug products have not been listed as prohibited drugs in NSW and when chemicals are banned, manufacturers respond by altering the chemical makeup of their products to circumvent the law.

The Chair of the Committee, Mr Dominic Perrottet, explained the reforms recommended by the Committee: "We need a simple and co-ordinated approach to tackle synthetic drugs. State and federal agencies need to work together to classify new drugs as they emerge. We've recommended that the NSW Government join other States in adopting Schedule 9 of the Federal Standards for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons into NSW legislation. This will control synthetic drug products pre-emptively through the use of broad categories that cover many different chemical compounds, making enforcement of bans easier to police."

"Until now, to prove that a synthetic drug was a prohibited drug analogue, prosecutors have had to demonstrate that it had psychotropic properties. We've recommended that the law be amended to simplify this and remove any subjectivity and disputes between expert witnesses."

Mr Perrottet continued: "We've also recommended the implementation of bans on synthetic drug products through NSW Fair Trading. The Minister for Fair Trading will issue interim bans on synthetic drug products that could cause injury and, if the banned products are found to contain a prohibited synthetic drug, retailers could be charged and fined and possibly imprisoned for supply of prohibited drugs. This will ensure that retailers are held responsible for selling harmful products, and reduce the public's exposure to these substances."

The Committee has also recommended improved co-ordination between state agencies and on a national level, and a public awareness campaign to educate the community about the risks synthetic drugs can pose to users.

A copy of the report can be downloaded from www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/legalaffairs.

For further comment please contact the Committee Chair Mr Dominic Perrottet on 02 9634 7474.