

**Submission  
No 4**

**INQUIRY INTO LAW REFORM ISSUES REGARDING  
SYNTHETIC DRUGS**

**Name:** Ms Margaret Morgan

**Date Received:** 5/04/2012



April 5,2012.

Legislative Assembly Legal Affairs Committee

Inquiry into Law Reform Issues Regarding Synthetic Drugs

To The Honourable Committee Members,

My submission to the Inquiry as a private citizen and community member is to present my concerns regarding the availability of synthetic/designer drugs in my local community.

For the past three years I have been studying in Community Services, Mental Health and Alcohol & Drugs, and have become acutely aware of the mental health, physical health problems and the tax payer expenses for medical treatment required; the cost in dollars and valuable time from legal point of view, resulting from people who have fallen prey to the legal and illegal drugs already available in society today.

Legislating against synthetic/designer drugs may indeed prove futile, as the makers of these substances change the formula, so the legislation becomes moot.

Providing funding to appropriate institutions for research into the short and long term effects of synthetic/designer drug substances on the physical and mental health of users and support for their families and by placing restrictions on retail outlets who supply them could possibly be considered. Delivering equal status to Retail outlets who sell these substances, as regulations imposed on Hotels and Clubs restricting entry to people who are under 18 years of age may also be considered.

I hope you will give consideration to my view, I thank you for taking time to read my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Morgan



## ***Availability of Designer/Synthetic Drugs***

**My submission concerns the availability of various forms Designer/Synthetic Drugs for sale from Tobacconist and other retail outlets in the community.**

A recent visit to a Tobacconist Shop in the local area offered an awareness of the variety of Designer/Synthetic drugs available for the public to purchase.

### **Substances for sale:**

Substances for sale included synthetic cannabis, packaged in 1 – 3gram weights and sold in clear plastic sachets. The herbal substance was labelled as ***“Incense not for Smoking”*** yet displayed in a cabinet that also contained smoking implements such as bongos, cones, pipes, and cigarette papers. The products had names such as ***“Kronic, Pineapple Express, Ash and Northern Lights.”*** These were just a few of the products available for purchase. There were also colourful posters displayed on the window of one shop advertising these products in store now.

Available in the shop were packets containing 1-4 tablets with prices ranging from \$20.00 for one tablet, two tablets \$40.00 and packs of four tablets at \$75.00. The tablets packets were labelled ***“Exotic, Giggle and Fusion X.”*** Advice offered on the packs recommended users to take One tablet a time. A white crystalline powder packaged in a small glass vial named ***“Krystal Snow”*** at a cost of \$80.00 for 1 gram was also available.

All the substances were displayed in a glass fronted cabinet providing maximum visibility for the purchasers to select from.

### **Information available:**

The counter top of the cabinet had written information on individual products clearly displayed, naming the products and the effects the purchaser can expect to obtain. Descriptions included ***“Diablo” strong as hell if you are after a physical high, “Hypnotic” is for kicking back or going hard, “Storm” feel the power;*** this is just a small sample of the products and information on offer.

Outside one shop a blackboard promotes the ***“Special of the Week Northern Lights”***.

### **Tobacco Outlets:**

When entering a Tobacconist shop one would expect to see tobacco products, but not necessarily herbal substances in clear plastic sachets, packets of tablets, and vials of white powder, with dubious names and a graphic description of the effects produced by using these substances.

- Supermarkets and corner stores must be keep tobacco products in concealed shelving.
- Gaming rooms in Hotels and Clubs have restricted entry to people under 18 years of age and yet there is no restriction of entry to tobacconist shops or other retail outlets selling these Synthetic/Designer drug substances.

### **Concerns include:**

- Young people under 18 years of age can enter the premises and view all the products
- Information clearly displayed provides a graphic description of the effects the user can expect from the substance
- Anecdotal evidence suggests young people who have used these synthetic/designer drugs have presented to paramedics with violent and aggressive behaviour
- Lack of detection testing for the use of these substances
- People operating machinery or driving vehicles may use these products with no detection when tested
- The short and long term outcomes for young people who experiment with these substances
- The short and long term effects on the physical and mental health of the user/s, their families and the community
- The short and long term cost to the user, their family, the community and the health system

Cannabis has been referred to as a gateway drug for the introduction of harder drug substance use. Surely these synthetic/designer drug substances, their wide spread availability, the shop glass fronted cabinet presentation, the information to read of the effects customers, including young people and children accompanying their parents, siblings or friends can expect to obtain, placed for maximum visibility on the counter top poses an (as yet unknown) equal to if not greater threat to the community.

### **Consideration given to:**

- Banning the substances may prove futile as they may remain available on the internet for those who wish to purchase them.
- Consigning the same status to synthetic/designer drugs, as tobacco products restricting the sale to people over 18years.
- Presentation of the substances restricted from public view.
- Restrict in store and out of store, advertising to “customer request only.”
- Tobacconists and retail outlets of synthetic/designer drugs be given equal status as gaming rooms in Hotels and Clubs, with restricted entry to young people under 18 years of age.

### **Conversations, Enquiries and Presentations:**

To date I have written, emailed and presented information on the availability of Designer/Synthetic drugs to Federal Ministers and Senators including The offices of the Federal Attorney General, Health Minister and Mental Health Minister, NSW Government Ministers including the offices of Attorney General, Health Minister, Mental Health Minister, and the Police Minister.

I have spoken on the issue with the representatives of the Police Force and members of the community at The Community Crime Prevention Committee, presented a paper, and addressed delegates at ALP Country Conference, met with and had discussions with Doctors, Drug and Alcohol Counsellors, and Counsellors at Neighbourhood Centres, both in and out of the district, and as far afield as Coffs Harbour, St Marys (Sydney), and Wollongong, on the availability of Designer/synthetic drugs and lack of information and legislation surrounding them.

The front page of the Newcastle Herald, Saturday March 24, 2012 read “Drugs in Disguise”, Health alarm over mysterious new party highs, an investigative report into the availability and use of Designer drugs in the Hunter region; and yet a Media Release by the NSW Minister, Honourable Kevin Humphries MP, Banned Synthetic Cannabis in NSW, in June 2011, (there was no mention of the other products that are now widely available for purchase.)

### **Reference**

Newcastle Herald, The Voice of the Hunter (March 24, 2012)

<http://db.ndri.curtin.edu.au/research/research.asp?resprtyid=24&typeid=1>

[http://www.randallwebber.com/free\\_course](http://www.randallwebber.com/free_course)

Margaret Morgan