

Appendix 1

Summary of discussion at LOAD Meetings

January - February 2007

With the aim of gaining feedback from the AOD sector and allied health and social service professionals, a BZP presentation was delivered and discussed at seven LOAD forums throughout the South Island.

Discussion was thoughtful and considered yet there was no clear consensus as to whether we as a sector should support the EACD's recommendation to make BZP illegal or whether we should advocate for keeping it legal with stronger controls. In most forums the meeting was approximately 40% supported the move to schedule C, making it illegal; 40% for keeping legal status but with tighter controls and the remainder were unsure. Only one centre was overwhelmingly in favour of the current recommendation to make BZP illegal.

Arguments for illegality (current recommendation from EACD)

The harms are greater than that seen in the current research: pockets where these harms were most noted: Nelson/Marlborough; West Coast.

Research may have had a biased sample: how do we know that people using BZP were at home in the evening to participate in the SHORE telephone survey; long term research on the harms is unavailable

Making a substance illegal is effective in reducing widespread use of a substance: e.g. Nitrous Oxide, GHB.

Sends a clear message; easier to implement controls.

We have a culture of take a pill to get happy; it is time to address this especially with youth. Important to focus on resilience rather than escapism.

Arguments for legal status with tighter controls

Alcohol remains the drug that causes the greatest harm; it is legal and regulated.

Making BZP illegal will send the drug underground thereby introducing people to different and hidden harms.

BZP has been on the market for too long to make it illegal now.

If this is made illegal another substance will replace it and we will be in the same place

Our regulatory structure should use BZP as an example and ensure that we can respond faster with future substances

Written Comments re BZP Classification

Should all quantities of BZP, phenylpiperazine and related piperazines be illegal or not? No Why?

- I have experienced in my life many body altering substances in myself and others. 5 years ago, before BZP had been classified in Aotearoa, I was given some with very little knowledge of it, and consumed it some weeks later. The effect I first experienced with BZP was an accepting of an altered personality to my usual self. On reflection without the drug, I saw the character that this produced in me to be so different to my usual self that the actions I undertook while under the influence of BZP are regrettable and unrepeatable. While in Amsterdam I entered a shop called 'Magic Mushroom Gallery' (the sale\consumption of psilocybin fungi is not illegal there) while there I picked up a pamphlet about the effects of taking these mushrooms. I

found their points to be agreeable and intriguing ie increased laughing, intensified awareness of colours, altered sense of time, also it stated pregnancy and mental illness don't usually mix agreeably with psilocybin. Pamphlets such as these should certainly be available in the places of sale for BZP, giving potential buyers all known information.

- BZP's are a base for a wide group of phenyls that are and have been developed for medicinal use. You can not remove the base from pharmacopoeia list. Any derivative must be under the control of the medical council for the sake of people lives, any other products for sale that might require some derivative of BZP; foodstuffs flavourings, again under the requisite control of Food and health determinations, preferably not in the food chain, but its cheap flavouring, once you have containment in those areas, then industrial uses comes in and again, requisite controls through industrial processes can play apart. After that, then BZP as a substance in its own right should not be available to the general public. All things have their uses and political knee jerk reactions do more harm than good.

Should all quantities of BZP, phenylpiperazine and related piperazines be illegal or not? Yes and Why ?

- My comments are rather of the nature of "on the one hand or the other". The major problems that the party pill industry has been associated with in regard to concerns from the community have related to the "Party Pills" shops being set up widely in the community and allegations of targeting young people (under 18 year olds). These seem to have developed from the NOS trend that operated (and may still do) for a while in the City. The party pill industry certainly seems to have grown in recent times and there is a wide spread use of the pills in a wide range of people in the community. So, on the one hand the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs are strongly evidence based and could be supported - making such drugs illegal could mean that the "shops" that have caused concern will, if not disappearing, be less obviously in the community (perhaps). On the other hand it is possible (as some in the industry allege) that it could lead to an increase in the use of more significant harmful drugs such as "P". The Committee accepts that the change may not lead to reduced use of BZP although that did occur with GHB . The making of this illegal could also reduce any controls over manufacturing standards and of course the introduction of criminal elements if the market remains. Despite the concerns expressed above, in the long term, there are sufficient problems with legal recreational drugs such as alcohol to attempt at least to reduce the availability of other such as BZP by classifying it under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. It then falls into the same category as cannabis.
- The ease of availability of 'Party Pills' has led to a culture amongst many youths in which they think that you cannot socialise or have fun without 'enhancing' the experience with drugs. Use of these pills has huge potential to make users feel relaxed about being 'high' and comfortable with taking substances, leading to risk-taking with other similar or more powerful illicit drugs. Many are under the illusion (in my opinion) that as 'Party Pills' are not illegal, they must be safe to use and therefore users have no concerns about using them regularly. There is plenty of evidence from our hospital emergency rooms of large numbers of people presenting on a weekly basis with severe symptoms associated with a reaction to 'Party Pill' consumption, with or without other substances. Resources for the agencies policing the current legislation are unlikely to be adequate given that more than 5 million pills are sold annually in NZ.
- BZP and its derivatives in reality can be classed in the same category as amphetamines and ecstasy and we are all ready well aware of the impact that these drugs have on society at large. It would seem that these types of "pills" are marketed as a herbal alternative (it could also be said that cannabis could be described as a "herb") but the impact on society and the related medical, social and policing agencies has such a profound effect on all involved and that is without consideration of the financial costs to the health system and the destructiveness of the quality of life to those who choose to use these "pills" and experience some of the more unpleasant and possibly life effecting side effects. Also there is concern that those who manufacture and supply BZP are doing so without any obvious controls or consideration to effects that the use of such "pills' can have of those who may use them. Social responsibility would appear to be non-existent as against that of profitability, and a "drug" that has the potential to cause harm is still a "drug" regardless of the obvious "herbal' connotations that have been attached to BZP and it's derivatives.

- From what I understand, some of these drugs are used in party pills and are highly dangerous. Young people are mixing them with alcohol and it is having disastrous results.
- I believe we could have an increase in “parkinsonian” type illnesses potentially occurring for some of the population in their forties because of cumulative abuse of BZP in their younger years. I think it is “poor man’s P” and should be banned full stop. Australia has been proactive in banning BZP and we in New Zealand should follow suit in my opinion. Just because there have been no fatalities from BZP does not make it safe.

What else needs to be considered?

- These drugs should be by prescription only through chemists and then only as authorised by a GP when needed to be taken for medical purposes.
- That adequate funding is provided for the continuation of research into the long term effects of the use of BZP.
- I am concerned with the placement of herbal shops. For instance there is a herbal haven opposite East gate mall which has a high amount of young people from the local high school walking passed every day. I think this is of great concern and I have never seen a herbal shop in Merivale or Fendalton. (please use extra pages if required)
- If EACD recommendations are enacted and 'Party Pills' become illegal, consideration needs to be given to training and resourcing of staff from agencies that will be enforcing the new legislation.
- Make the manufacture of party pills subject to strict controls under food and health and medicine disciplines, Make the manufacturers responsible under those requirements and tax the hell out of them through licensing etc. At the moment there is a 90% profit margin on the party pills, make them un-profitable under the requirements now available, they are easy to make so you can not just ban them. Take control of manufacture, distribution and culpability and price them off the face of the planet.
- One year ago a friend of mine with epilepsy took BZP, for the first time, and did not take his medication when due to within 12 hours. He then had a seizure, his first in almost a year, this is undoubtedly because of the BZP he took.
I have taken several illegal substances and always experienced positively, rewardingly, controllably. However the times in which I have taken BZP, around 5 in total, none in the past 2 years, I have felt uncomfortable, breathless, exhausted yet unable to stop moving, furthermore I have 'lost my mind' to the point of doing activities which I always consider to be unsuitable for me.
Most importantly I believe, is the scenario to view of a 'drug comedown', experienced usually 6 - 10 hours after ingestion. I have never experienced a negative situation during this period of time with illegal substances, always feelings of great joy and connectedness, peacefulness. The full meaning in the phrase 'drug comedown' hit me after the first time I ingested BZP, when I had no sleepiness even though I had been awake all night, and felt that my physical body was literally about to fall apart, and my actions through the night, harmless yet unrepeatable, were despicable.
Alcohol is the only other drug which I experienced similar effects with.
I am 23 and am trained in youth work harm minimisation. I consider the vast majority of people who regularly take party pills to be mis-informed, misled, and therefore unintelligent.