

3.4 Deputy K.C. Lewis of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the banning of so-called legal-high drugs in the Island:

Will the Minister be seeking to ban the so-called legal-high drugs available in the Island?

Senator J.L. Perchard (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The short answer is yes. "Legal-highs" is a term used to describe substances that mimic the effects of illegal drugs such as ecstasy, L.S.D. (lysergic acid diethylamide), cannabis and amphetamines such as speed which are not controlled by the Misuse of Drugs (Jersey) Law. Common so-called legal-high products are products such as Spice which is smoked, cannabis and party pills or herbal highs which look and act like ecstasy, containing a drug called benzylpiperazine, B.Z.P. It is no surprise that these drugs have a similar range of side effects to those of illegal drugs that they are designed to copy. Dealers have been exploiting the fact that because they are technically legal, that means that they must be safe and this is just not the case. So far Jersey has become recognised as a frontrunner in tackling this new menace. Our first step was to ban the importation and marketing and sale of substances that can be defined as medical products which are contained in common legal highs. We have used our existing Medicines (Jersey) Law to achieve this. My department is also making progress towards classifying these substances under the Misuse of Drugs (Jersey) Law. This will make it illegal to possess or use these legal-highs. They will make them illegal-highs and we hope to be able to achieve this during 2009.

3.4.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister be considering banning alcohol on the same principle, that it does an equal amount of harm as legal highs?

Senator J.L. Perchard:

No, there is no plan to ban alcohol on the same principle.

3.4.2 Senator Syvret:

Well, to follow on from that question about alcohol, would the Minister agree with me that the obnoxious, foul, drunken and disgraceful social conduct that some people can engage in when they are intoxicated really is something that we ought to stamp out in our society? [Approbation]

Senator J.L. Perchard:

Absolutely.

3.4.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister suspect that he may be discriminating against the responsible users of current legal-highs by seeking to ban them?

Senator J.L. Perchard:

The point about legal-highs is we do not know what is in the substance. We do not know the make-up. They are being sold as legal therefore there is an innuendo, an assumption that they are safe. They are not because we do not know what is in them. The contents of alcohol is known. Okay, I am not suggesting for one minute that alcohol is not harmful, but unknown substances taken either orally or smoked can be very dangerous because we do not know what is in them.

3.4.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Is the Minister therefore saying that he knows the total ingredients of everything that he consumes?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Well, that was a question, Minister. I think you should give some answer, whatever you want to say. Minister, you have been asked a question, please answer it in some way.

Senator J.L. Perchard:

No, I do not know the total ingredients of everything I consume.

3.4.5 Deputy T. Pitman of St. Helier:

I was just going to point out that we do not know some of the chemicals coming out of the incinerator chimney, so what have we done about that?

The Deputy Bailiff:

So what was your question then, Deputy?

Deputy T. Pitman:

Are we going to ban it? It is obviously a risk, could be a very serious risk.

Senator J.L. Perchard:

I have got no plans to ban the incinerator chimney.

3.4.6 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Back to reality. The question I asked regarding ketamine ranks as a Class C drug and the sixth most dangerous illegal drug available. It was originally used in Vietnam to treat wounded soldiers but was found very dangerous and has hallucinogenic properties and obviously should be banned. Does the Minister not agree?

Senator J.L. Perchard:

Absolutely and I hope the questioner can take some assurance from my intentions to deal with this and set the model of good practice on how we can get to grips with this relatively new and disturbing drug that is starting to become commonplace in many communities, but fortunately not Jersey.