

TGA

Re:- Regulatory Controls of Alkyl Nitrates

Melbourne – 8 Jan 2019

I am a gay man, 53 years of age. I have used "poppers" also known as Nitrates, Butyl Nitrate, Amyl Nitrate and Alkyl Nitrate sporadically since age of 18.

I would say that I would use it twice a month on average, while having anal intercourse. I am not "addicted" to it – meaning I can actually go many months without having it, however there is no doubting it makes sexual activity possible and more comfortable.

The short inhalation leads to a 30 – 45 second period where the mind and anus are more relaxed, and penetration becomes possible more easily. This has helped me to be able to have a rewarding sex life, and not to fall into depression from my inability to do what others can do.

Numbing creams do not work in the same way – and are expensive. There are some companies now selling numbing cream for \$70 and up in adult stores – preying on the "shortage" of poppers in the market. I doubt that these numbing creams in Adult Shops are actually TGA approved (as they are not a medicine) which puts consumers more at risk, putting something potentially unapproved for use inside the body, into their anus.

While travelling in Portugal and Spain in June/July 2018 with my partner, we noticed that poppers was freely available in Portugal (in the major cities of Lisbon and Porto). However in Madrid, it was not available in adult stores. They directed us to the Dating Apps – as people sell it there. The issue with this is that the same people selling Poppers are also selling Ice and other illicit drugs.

By forcing poppers into the hands of dealers, it is basically this is putting consumers in the position of ***"should I buy poppers for \$50, or should I buy a hit of Ice or MDMA for \$50"***. It is really terrible that this is then the reality – that people choose Ice, which is far more dangerous to their system and health, puts them at actual risk of addiction.

One of my friends actually has done this in Nov 2018 – and ended up with multiple visits at Melbourne Sexual Health Centre – doing full testing and screening because he ended up getting gang raped without condoms after turning to Ice one night. He has as a result acquired Herpes anally, and will require treatment with Valtrex for life (which is a massive cost to the PBS). Had poppers been available at the Club X shop near him he would not have been tempted.

Putting poppers in the hands of drug dealers is irresponsible, and likely to increase the incidence of drug dependency, as well as the incidental increase of HIV sero conversion, as people undertake more risky behaviours under the influence of drugs.

While there is a concern that people taking Viagra and Cialis are at risk of complications, making Poppers illegal does not fix this.

However if poppers were to be made more freely available (and not underground) and require a government warning on it about the use of Poppers with Viagra and Cialis, the actual risks would reduce to zero. Instead of pushing it underground, you have a chance to do something about the only document risk. Take that chance please. Approve the product, make it legitimate, and enforce a standard for the labelling.

I hope that the TGA can follow the UK model and realise that this is not a drug of addiction.

Listing it as a Prohibited substance can only cause more harm to public health, including an increase in HIV communication in Australia, and increased costs of treating HIV infections, and the social costs of drug addiction that will likely occur as people switch from Poppers to other drugs.

Regards

[Redacted Signature]