

**Submission in relation to interim decisions proposing to amend, or not amend, the current Poisons Standard, September 2018**

I am writing in relation to section 1.3 of the published interim decisions, relating to alkyl nitrites.

I **oppose** the proposed amendment.

I acknowledge that there are risks of harm associated with alkyl nitrites. However, I believe that those risks of harm can be more effectively managed through education than through an effective prohibition.

In the section considering “the purposes for which a substance is to be used and the extent of use of a substance,” the published reasons refer to use being recreationally as ‘party drugs’. However, they make no reference to use, primarily among the gay community, in anal sex. It is a mistake and a misnomer to include this use as ‘party’: the use is to increase comfort, and indeed pleasure, in the practice of anal sex.

The published reasons imply that, because alkyl nitrites have little to no therapeutic use, they should not be available. Therapeutic use is not the only reason why a substance should be available. In fact, the use of alkyl nitrites in the practice of anal sex is as much therapeutic use as the use of [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is legally available and alkyl nitrites could and should be too.

In the section considering “the potential for abuse of a substance,” the reasons do refer to use of alkyl nitrites as sex aids. Use during sex does not make that use ‘abuse’; it is a perfectly licit and reasonable use of the substances.

Prohibition will not eliminate the availability or use of alkyl nitrites. Instead, it will simply drive supply underground.

There is a range of illegal drugs used as ‘party drugs’ during ‘chemsex’: GHB, crystal meth, etc. Changing the scheduling of alkyl nitrites will effectively group them with those far more dangerous and addictive drugs, supplied by the same underground suppliers and potentially becoming a gateway to those other drugs. Having alkyl nitrites available from adult shops and sex-on-premises venues isolates them from that underground supply chain and associates them with the therapeutic aspect of their use.

Unlike many of these other drugs, alkyl nitrites are not addictive.

In consideration of international regulations, the published reasons state: “In January 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) government included alkyl nitrites in a list of banned psychoactive substances, but this decision was set to be reviewed, and it is unclear whether this decision remains.” In fact, it is quite clear that the decision does not remain: while included in the legislative “blanket ban” it was subsequently exempted by government regulation.

I use alkyl nitrites to enable anal sex as passive partner, and some of my passive partners use it too. I have used alkyl nitrites for this purpose for many years, and have responded to education about how to use them safely and how to limit their use. The rescheduling would have a negative effect upon me.

Alkyl nitrites have a beneficial health and relationship effect in enabling anal sex for some men who have sex with men, and should not be rescheduled.