

RE: Including a group entry for Nitrite inhalants in Schedule 9 of the Poisons Standard.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute. I open by stating that I oppose the current position set out by the TGA to schedule Nitrite Inhalants as schedule 9 chemicals under the Poisons standard.

For decades poppers have been a key part of gay culture, whilst the review has wrongly claimed their use is recreational, poppers are a key part of penetrative sexual intercourse for many gay and bisexual men serving a key therapeutic function.

The documentation on the TGA website used to support the banning of Amyl Nitrite and poppers is not completely factually correct. Whilst poppers may have been found to be commonly used by gay and bisexual men in chem sex involving other illicit drugs to heighten their sexual experience the vast majority of gay and bisexual men using poppers don't actually mix poppers and illicit drugs.

For many gay men, poppers serve as a necessary purpose in sex, with illicit drug use as reprehensible to us as the rest of the community. What purpose would scheduling poppers to schedule 9 achieve other than overnight effectively making virtually every Gay or Bisexual man a criminal?

Let me be clear yes we recognise that poppers are generally not good for peoples health. However they're not deadly even the TGA's own information recognises this, the "high" they create is only short in duration usually only a matter of minutes, resulting shortly there after in the commencement of the side effects taking course. However unlike illicit drugs, poppers are NOT addictive they don't cause the destruction of society or permanent cognitive or social destruction of personal faculties for those that choose to use them.

Instead Gay and bisexual men rely on them for receptive anal intercourse to relax the muscles around the sphincter and rectum to make sexual intercourse pleasurable and in some cases even possible.

I argue that the banning of poppers has the potential to cause damage to the rectum and anal canal of receptive sexual partners particularly if they are not using condoms thus increasing the risk of people acquiring HIV, hepatitis and other blood borne STIs.

Whilst I'm not opposed to the need to regulate Amyl Nitrite and other poppers, I am opposed to their banning altogether. A measured response is vital in this instance.

Last year codeine was made a schedule 4 drug because of the annual death toll of 91 deaths per year due to codeine and opiate addiction.

Tobacco and alcohol remain generally unregulated despite their clear toxicity profiles and the negative social effects that they have on the community.

Placing Nitrite inhalants and other poppers as schedule 9 chemicals is a gross overreach based on the clear lack of research and flimsy evidence of their harm. Again Nitrite inhaleants do not cause addiction or the loss of control of personal faculties or unsocial behaviour. So why place them into a category similar to illicit drugs? Unless of course the TGA is intentionally being discriminatory to Gay and Bisexual men and engaging in flagrant homophobia?

A way forward

Whilst I recognise that Amyl Nitrites and poppers must have some level of toxicity due to the painful side effects they have after use. It must be recognised that no therapeutic product can be completely side effect free and the benefit must outweigh the risk. I do however recognise that Nitrite Inhalants/poppers, none the less do require some level of regulation for the purposes that Gay and Bisexual men use them for.

Until a less toxic alternative that delivers similar therapeutic benefits is developed by the pharmaceutical industry I propose that Nitrite Inhalants be classified as at least a schedule 3 chemical making them available over the counter in a chemist with the same rules around their use as Psudoephidrine where users provide their drivers license number or a form of ID which is recorded.

Alternatively taking the extra step of placing them into schedule 4 making them prescription only would still be a better option than banning them altogether.

Regards

