

Re: Including a group entry for nitrite inhalants in Schedule 9 of the Poisons Standard

To whom it may concern,

I am a gay transgender man – a member of the community that is most affected by the proposed changes. I am a current Master or research student in biological sciences at [REDACTED], having completed my undergraduate degree in biological sciences at [REDACTED]. In addition to my biology qualifications in science I have been an active member and activist in LGBT rights in [REDACTED], as well as having run [REDACTED] Queer Collective for [REDACTED] working with LGBT health and welfare organisations such as ACCON, Twenty-10 and the Australian Queer Students' Network (AQSN).

I personally regularly have used the nitrites, commonly known as 'poppers' [REDACTED] in order for me to enjoy a safe and health sex life. The 'high' effects of poppers is short-acting and as such their purpose to those who take them is not to seek a 'high' but to engage in more comfortable sex. Poppers as such play an important role for many gay men in order to make anal intercourse less painful due to the relaxing of smooth muscle when taken. Glyceryl trinitrate, a similar tropic nitrate product is available to the public at pharmacists for the same muscle relaxant reason. These poppers have been used by the gay community for sexual intercourse purposes since 1970's and therefore have an important cultural and sexual purpose for LGBT people.

It is clear to me that this change to ban poppers is not based on any scientific or medical evidence or fear for the public's safety, but as a clear attack on gay men and the way in which we have sex. A Home Affairs Select Committee report found the use of poppers was 'not seen to be capable of having harmful effects sufficient to constitute a societal problem.'^[i] Similar medical literature finds that there are only a handful of actual case reports that document injuries from popper use; such as retinal injuries due however to countries such as the EU (2007) and Canada (2013) banning the sale of chemical formulation used in popper products. Due to these regulatory action, manufactures are forced to include different chemical formulations which caused symptoms such as headaches, 'blue lips' and a chesty cough ^[ii].

This provides evidence that banning poppers will not prevent injury or people from seeking other relaxants but till only cause alternative products to replace current poppers. These alternatives are not nitrite inhalants and do carry safety and health risks similar to paint-sniffing.

Poppers have now been used for five decades in the gay community with little reports of any actual serious harm or safety issues. Recent reports now document a new form of harm previously undocumented that can be linked as a result of these new reformulated products after the ban of nitrates inhalants. Therefore banning nitrite inhalants will have serious impact for harm to many gay Australian men in order to achieve intimacy and sexual intercourse without pain or discomfort.

This ban will target gay men, a historically marginalised and oppressed community that have faced previous criminal prosecution within Australia. This new regulation will see gay men become criminally targeted once again by the Australian government and police.

I implore you to look at the scientific and medical evidence and see the oppressive persecution gay men will once again face with this ban. Do not repeat Australian's past mistakes of oppressing LGBT people for simply trying to have sexual intercourse.

[i] Home Affairs Committee, Psychoactive Substances (report), London: Stationery Office, 23 Oct 2015, p. 14 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmhaff/361/361.pdf>

[ii] Gruener, Anna M., Megan A. R. Jeffries, Zine El Housseini, and Laurence Whitefield. "Poppers Maculopathy." *The Lancet* 384, no. 9954 (November 1, 2014): 1606. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)60887-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)60887-4).