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## **Party Pill Ban Lapse Averts Disaster.**

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The Social Tonics Association of New Zealand today said that the pre-Christmas Party Pill ban was poorly planned. "A pre-Christmas ban would have sent hundreds of thousands of everyday kiwi consumers to the black market gangs to stock up for their festivities," said STANZ Chairman Matt Bowden, "it is hardly surprising that such a notion doesn't have enough support in Parliament, it was a dangerous and bad idea."

Associate Health Minister Jim Anderton referenced the Green Party as the reason the Bill could not be passed under urgency, but the Health Select Committee report issued on November 15<sup>th</sup> also made clear the Maori Party's position opposing the Bill, and the Act party have spoke strongly against the Bill at the first reading in Parliament.

"This sort of knee jerk banning reaction doesn't have the sort of support that it did last century, it sounds good to the ears, but it fails to make people safer. In fact it makes the environment for consumers far more dangerous. There are at least 3 parties who don't support the Bill and we are hearing rumblings that support for the Bill is not solid in the National or Labour parties either. Politicians are uneasy with it and so they should be."

Mr Bowden said that regulations should have been put in place last year around the manufacture and marketing of social tonics including BZP. "We all agree that something has to be done, but the truth is that the only reason that the industry is so successful here is because consumer demand for stimulants and dis-inhibitors is massive, banning won't make that demand go away it just shifts it to the Black Market. Prohibition empowers organised crime and criminalises too many ordinary people; it is not a sustainable policy."

Ministry of Health advice provided to the Minister last year suggested that putting tight regulations in place around the manufacture, marketing and sale of party pills would greatly reduce the risks and perceived risks associated with them, but was ignored.

"If the Minister had acted on the advice given to him and used the powers available to him last year to control how these products are manufactured, who is selling them and how, then we'd be able to do something about the one or two bad apples in the industry who spoil it for hundreds of businesses who act responsibly and in good faith," said Mr Bowden, "we could have had qualified personnel out there helping consumers today. Industry just wants to get on with setting new safety standards."

Recent Victoria University research revealed that when party pills are made illegal, high numbers of users will turn to more dangerous drugs. The Health Select Committee heard from a number of submitters concerned that this legislation was apparently being rushed to meet a Christmas deadline for no good reason and the research ignored.

"Right now is the peak festive season, and throwing 400,000 consumers to the black market and the gangs was never a good idea at any time, let alone this time of year. Now that we've taken the "Grinch who stole Christmas" element out of it, it simply means that consumers will be buying safer legal social tonics instead of buying illegal drugs from gangs, they are in light, not darkness.

"I encourage party goers to take less alcohol and other drugs over the festive season - make it memorable. Don't overdo it on New Years Eve or take more than you planned to, follow the instructions, and try to give your body a few weeks between parties to recover properly. You have the rest of your life ahead of you and you'll never regret sensible decisions."

**ENDS**

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