

Party Pill Promoters Must Face the Facts

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Associate Justice Minister and Waimakariri MP Clayton Cosgrove says a new study confirms that party pills are a gateway to illicit drugs, a serious road safety risk and are addictive, for many people.

The Massey University study, 'Legal party pill use in New Zealand', states that party pill users are much more likely to be using illicit drugs than the general population.

Mr Cosgrove said one in seven of those surveyed who had a history of party pill and illegal drug use admitted they moved onto using mainly illegal drugs after starting out with party pills.

"This proves that party pills are starting many young people on a dangerous path to harder drug use, and the manufacturers and promoters of these pills can no longer deny this fact," Mr Cosgrove said.

The survey questioned 2,010 people aged 13 – 45 years old, including 249 from Christchurch and surrounding areas. It is the first of four studies commissioned by the Ministry of Health into party pills and benzyloperazine (BZP). The Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs will consider the research at its next meeting in July.

The study also found that one in six party pill users had driven under the influence of the pills. Mr Cosgrove says this is particularly disturbing given recent reports of a young man driving after taking 40 party pills.

"Most concerning is the fact that people are becoming dependent on party pills. The survey found that one in 45 users were classified as dependant after testing," Mr Cosgrove said.

"People like Matt Bowden, New Zealand's 'Godfather' of party pills, claim that these pills are safe if people use them properly. Well, one in five people in this sample have tried party pills, and a large number of these people had no idea about the number of pills it is supposedly 'safe' to take in a single night, or what other substances should not be taken with party pills."

The study showed one in three party pill users said they drank more alcohol when using the pills, and nearly nine out of ten said they use other substances with them.

"People are mixing party pills with other substances without knowing what the effects of this could be," said Mr Cosgrove. "However, the ongoing cases of party pill users ending up in hospital emergency departments around the country speaks for itself."

"It's time for the party pill industry to stop hiding behind false excuses, half-truths, and unsubstantiated claims. People like Dr Paul Gee from the Christchurch Hospital Emergency Department, Professor Rob Hughes from Canterbury University and I have been speaking out against the misinformation being given by those that are making money out of this industry for some time."

"With annual industry sales estimated at \$24 million, there is no doubt that some

people are doing very well out of party pills. But evidence is steadily mounting that this is at huge cost to the wellbeing of our youth. Manufacturers and promoters of party pills have to face up to the fact that what they are doing is irresponsible and dangerous," Mr Cosgrove said.

"I agree with Hon Jim Anderton, the Associate Health Minister that once all the studies have been completed and if the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs recommends they be banned, we should do it immediately."

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