

20 July 2010

Hon Peter Dunne  
Associate Minister of Health  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister

### **Advice of the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs regarding norephedrine**

I last wrote to you regarding norephedrine on 1 August 2009 and provided you with the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs (the Committee). The Committee recommended that norephedrine be classified as a Class B2 controlled drug and a Schedule 4 precursor substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. You agreed to proceed with the classification of norephedrine as a precursor substance and requested further advice before proceeding with the classification as a Class B2 controlled drug.

The Committee met again to reconsider norephedrine on 16 April 2010 and has subsequently corresponded 'out-of-session' to consider the appropriate Part of Schedule 4 in which norephedrine should be placed. The minutes from the 16 April meeting are attached.

### **Background**

Norephedrine is a stereoisomer of phenylpropanolamine, which is listed under the Medicines Act 1981. Norephedrine/phenylpropanolamine was previously used as an appetite suppressant and a decongestant but the risk of side effects means that it will not be used in human medicine in future. There are no human medicines containing phenylpropanolamine now available in New Zealand.

Phenylpropanolamine is used in veterinary medicine: the product Propalin® is registered under the Agricultural Compound and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997 and is used for canine urinary incontinence.

Norephedrine is also a precursor substance that can be used in the manufacture of amphetamine, a Class B1 controlled drug.

### **The Committee's advice regarding norephedrine**

The Committee agreed that there is a potential risk of norephedrine being imported into New Zealand or diverted from domestic sources in order to be converted into amphetamine.

It was also agreed that in view of the current proposals to reclassify pseudoephedrine and ephedrine (precursors to methamphetamine) as Class B2 controlled drugs, if norephedrine is classified lower than Class B2 it could provide an incentive for the importation of norephedrine and increased amphetamine manufacture.

The Committee considered that there would only be a limited effect on industry should this substance be classified; however, a Class B2 classification would require consultation with relevant stakeholders such as veterinarians. Consideration would also be required on the continued status of phenylpropanolamine as a registered animal remedy and its classification as a prescription medicine under the Medicines Act.

Finally, the Committee agreed that norephedrine would not be appropriately scheduled as a Schedule 4, Part 2 precursor substance, as it is considered a 'primary' precursor (for amphetamine). The Committee also agreed there is insufficient information currently available to justify the scheduling of norephedrine in Schedule 4, Part 3 at this time. A consensus thus emerged that norephedrine should be scheduled in Part 1 of Schedule 4.

Therefore the Committee reaffirms its advice provided to you on 1 August 2009:

- **that norephedrine be classified in Part 2 of Schedule 2 (Class B2) in addition to classification as a Schedule 4 (Precursor Substance) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975**
- **that the “default” presumption for supply of 56 grams is appropriate, as currently provided for in Schedule 5(2) of the Misuse of Drugs Act.**

And the Committee's updated advice to you is:

- **that the appropriate placement for norephedrine as a precursor substance in the Misuse of Drugs Act is in Part 1 of Schedule 4.**

I would be pleased to discuss with you this advice or any issues arising.

Yours sincerely,

Ashley Bloomfield (Dr)  
**Chair**  
**Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs**

encl:

1. Draft Minutes of the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs meeting of 16 April 2010.
2. Advice paper on norephedrine prepared by the Ministry of Health in April 2010, considered at the Committee's 16 April 2010 meeting.
3. Advice paper on norephedrine prepared by the Ministry of Health in June 2010, recently considered 'out-of-session'.

cc. Dr Janice Wilson, Deputy Director-General, Population Health