

EXPERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DRUGS MEETING

**Thursday, 27 October 2005, 9:30am – 3:26pm
Northland Room, Old Bank Building, Wellington.**

MINUTES

Members present

Dr Ashley Bloomfield (Chair)
Dr Stewart Jessamine
Dr Keith Bedford (teleconference)
Dr Helen Moriarty
Peter Marshall
Paul Campbell
Professor Tim Maling
Dr Doug Sellman
Dr Geoffrey Robinson
Rajesh Chhana

Secretariat attending:

Kellee Koia
Chris Laurenson
Colin Lee
Bruce Atmore
Clare Van der Lem

1. WELCOME

Dr Bloomfield welcomed members, in particular Rajesh Chhana from Justice and Paul Campbell from Customs. The Chair noted that although they had not received their 'official' letter from the Minister, their contribution to the Committee would be valued.

2. APOLOGIES

Keremete Warbrick.

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were three potential conflicts of interest. One of these related to a member being involved with the organisation that submitted a BZP research proposal. It was decided that the member would leave the room when this agenda item was being discussed.

The others were that two members that they had been asked to be referees for the research proposal. The Committee decided that this did not pose a conflict of interest.

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 2 JUNE 2005

A member noted that Analogues was a generic heading and was meaningless on its own. The Committee agreed to amend the heading to:

“Analogue Provision in the Misuse of Drugs Act”

Subject to the above comment, the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2005 were confirmed as a true and accurate record of that meeting and would be signed by the Chairman.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD 2 JUNE 2005

Report on actions arising from 2 June 2005 meeting

5.1 *Minute Item 1.4 Letter to Dr Bob Boyd*

Issue

The committee agreed that the Secretariat would draft a letter, for the Chairman's signature, to the previous Chair thanking him for his services to the EACD.

Outcome

A letter dated 29 June 2005 was sent to Dr Boyd thanking him for his services.

Discussion

Members noted the above outcome.

5.2 *Minute Item 3.1 Ketamine*

Issue

Members agreed that the Secretariat would provide the Committee with Australian background information and information regarding what subsequently happened.

Outcome

The Australian information had been provided as well as submissions regarding the classification of Ketamine – refer to Item 6.

5.3 *Minute Item 4.2 LSD*

Issue

Members agreed that the Secretariat would attempt to locate and provide members with the papers relating to the original classification for LSD.

Outcome

The Secretariat had been unable to locate the papers regarding the original classification of LSD in the 1960s.

Discussion

Members noted the above action and some mentioned that they thought that might have been the case, considering that LSD was classified in the late 1960's or early 1970's. It was proposed that the Committee look at the classification of LSD and members discussed the options available to do this. The Committee also discussed the new parliamentary process for reclassifying substances downwards and of their concern that there was a drift towards classifying substances as Class A. A member suggested that there should be no more than 10 substances in Class A at any one time; otherwise its validity was undermined.

Agreed:

- **That the Secretariat would prepare a paper on LSD that compares and contrasts LSD with Methamphetamine, highlighting any discrepancies in the scheduling, for the next meeting.**

5.4 Minute Item 6 Letter to Hon Jim Anderton

Issue

The committee agreed to write a letter to Hon Jim Anderton that would note:

- The paucity of research on BZP;
- Endorsement of the research being done;
- That the Committee felt the recommended penalties were too light;
- The desirability of a public education campaign, using existing drug education providers that focused on taking unknown drugs in a party environment and the mixing of BZP with other substances (e.g. alcohol).

Outcome

A letter dated 30 June 2005 was sent to Hon Jim Anderton.

Discussion

Members noted the letter. The Committee was given an overview of what has happened regarding the issue of regulating Restricted Substances. Members were also advised of the three research projects currently being undertaken in regard to BZP. Members agreed that until the research is completed, it is difficult for the Committee to provide advice on issues such as dosage and packaging.

5.5 Minute Item 7 Report on Nitrous Oxide

Issue

Members agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a full report on nitrous oxide.

Outcome

The Secretariat provided a report for members for discussion as agenda item 7.

5.6 Minute Item 8 Benzodiazepines

Issue

Members agreed that:

- There would not be a formal review of Benzodiazepines with a view to reclassification at this time;
- A paper on Zopiclone would be prepared and would include:
 - A summary on Benzodiazepines
 - International drug convention obligations.

Outcome

A paper on Zopiclone was prepared for discussion as agenda item 8.

5.7 Minute Item 9.2 Notes on the Controlled Drug Analogue provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Act and the concept of a “holding schedule” for new substances (Dr Bedford)

Issue

Members agreed that Dr Bedford would prepare a one-page report describing how Analogues were working and an explanation of how Analogues were being used currently as the equivalent of a ‘safety net’.

Outcome

Dr Bedford prepared the report, which was distributed to members via email on 28 June 2005 and would be discussed under General Business.

5.8 Minute Item 9.3 Other Drug Committees

Issue

Members agreed that the Secretariat would contact the National Drug Intelligence Bureau (NDIB) to provide a brief update on the scope of activities around methamphetamine.

Outcome

NDIB would do a presentation as agenda item 9.

5.8 Minute Item 9.5 Alcohol

Issue

The Chair would informally seek the views of the Minister as to whether the EACD should consider where alcohol would fit in the MODA schedules and to use this as a benchmarking exercise.

Outcome

The Chair advised that he did seek the views of the Minister’s office, as well as the views of the previous Chair. Both suggested that the EACD should not address this issue formally.

Discussion

Some members reiterated that since alcohol was the one drug that people know so much about, it was rational to apply the criteria to alcohol. The Chair confirmed that alcohol issues, such as age of purchase, advertising and marketing will be aired during the term of this Parliament by way of the Sale of Liquor (Youth Alcohol Harm Reduction) Amendment Bill 2005. However, no further action is to be taken by the EACD at this time.

6. KETAMINE

Members received three papers for this agenda item:

1. Information Used by the Australian National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee to Reschedule Ketamine
2. Submissions Regarding the Classification of Ketamine
3. Preliminary Paper on Ketamine that was discussed at the meeting held on 19 March 2004.

Members also received updated statistics on "Ketamine Use in New Zealand", which were in the preliminary paper.

At the previous meeting, the Committee requested submissions from organisations such as:

- The College of Anaesthetists
- The Veterinary Surgery Association.

Four submissions were received; all submissions recommended that Ketamine be classified under the Misuse of Drugs Act. The recommended schedule in which Ketamine should be classified ranged from Class A to Class C4.

The Committee discussed whether Ketamine use had increased significantly, and according to the statistics received, use had decreased in 2003 compared to 2001. Members concurred that while Ketamine was not a widely used drug, there was a small but definite market.

The Committee discussed the medical benefits and possible side effects and level of harm from Ketamine use. It was noted that one of the issues is that Ketamine does not have to be locked away and that theft of the substance from hospital trolleys has occurred. Safer storage was identified as one of the primary aims of the scheduling.

The Committee looked at where substances such as Benzodiazepines were classified and compared Ketamine use with these substances.

Agreed:

- **That a recommendation be made to the Minister of Health that Ketamine should be classified under the Misuse of Drugs Act, in Schedule C4.**
- **The Secretariat would prepare a paper with the above recommendation to the Minister.**

7. NITROUS OXIDE

Members received a report on Nitrous Oxide that outlined the current classification, medical use, recreational use/abuse and the risks posed to public health.

The Committee was advised that Nitrous Oxide is now controlled under the Medicines Act. Members were provided with an update of a recent enforcement operation in Christchurch and the on-going collaboration between Customs and the Ministry of Health's enforcement advisor in the identification of legitimate importers of the substance.

Agreed:

Members agreed to write to the Minister about the current Nitrous Oxide process noting that the Committee is happy with this process for the time-being, however they would monitor the situation and revisit the topic in the future as necessary.

8. ZOPICLONE

Members received two papers for this agenda item:

1. A paper on Zopiclone
2. An Overview of the Scheduling of the Hypnotic Sedatives.

The original issue was that Benzodiazepines were classified as C5 prior to the formation of the EACD. The EACD wanted to look at Benzodiazepines being classified as C5 and the fact that other hypnotic-type drugs are not scheduled, even though they are more harmful or are similar to Benzodiazepines.

The Committee noted that although the substance Zolpidem is not in use in New Zealand, under New Zealand's international obligations, it needs to consider this substance. Also, for the purposes of consistency, members felt that Zopiclone should be classified in the same schedule as Zolpidem. Zopiclone and Zolpidem are currently a prescription medicine under the Medicines Act, 1981.

The Committee felt that data regarding prescribing levels and abuse/dependence levels need to be collected and that a literature search focussed upon abuse and drugged driving be done in order to get as much information as possible. Submissions from manufacturers would also be useful.

The Committee also discussed Thalidomide, and an explanation was given as to why that substance was originally put into Class A. However, members also discussed the fact that there are now a number of legitimate uses of Thalidomide and that the control mechanisms in place are stricter than those of Class A of the Misuse of Drugs Act, while Thalidomide has no abuse potential. The Committee agreed that it would

be interested in looking at whether Thalidomide still needs to remain as Class A, although this is not a priority issue.

Members discussed whether the Committee needs to look at Anti-histamines however, it was decided that these would not be pursued any further at this stage.

Agreed:

- **That the product manufacturer of Zopiclone and Zolpidem be asked to put in a submission regarding the classification of the substance.**
- **That the Secretariat would prepare a paper on Zolpidem and the distinction between this class of compounds, Zopiclone and the benzodiazepines.**
- **The Committee would decide at the next meeting whether to make a recommendation regarding Zopiclone and Zolpidem and at what level on the schedule to make that recommendation.**
- **That the Secretariat would prepare a paper on the current classification of Thalidomide including reasons for and against the substance remaining as Class A (lower priority than other topics discussed).**

9. NDIB UPDATE ON METHAMPHETAMINE ACTIVITIES

The National Drug Intelligence Bureau (NDIB) presented an update on methamphetamine activities to the Committee. There were two parts to the presentation:

1. The Methamphetamine Situation in New Zealand
2. Identifying International Trend Developments.

There was a discussion as to whether enough resources were being put into methamphetamine in New Zealand and the Committee were given an overview of the methamphetamine situation in Hawaii. It was also discussed that methamphetamine was not just being used for the 'rush' experience but also by truck drivers and in the computer industry to stay 'focused and awake'.

Agreed:

- **That Dr Bedford would look at the potential analogue status of Norephedrine and that the Committee would not look into this substance until they have received this advice.**
- **That the Secretariat would check on the United Nations decision regarding Norephedrine.**

10. BZP RESEARCH

The Chair had referred to the Committee a research proposal concerning the effects on driving performance of legal party pills that was received by the Ministry of Health. The Committee discussed whether it is within their Terms of Reference to advise on specific research proposals. However, it was agreed that further research into the use and impact of BZP was necessary and it was agreed that the proposal containing the effects of BZP compared with those of alcohol would be the most useful. It is now up to the Ministry of Health to decide how to progress this proposal.

11. GENERAL BUSINESS

11.1 Notes on the Controlled Drug Analogue provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Act and the concept of a “holding schedule” for new substances (Dr Bedford)

The Committee discussed the possibility of a ‘holding stage’ for new substances. It was noted that there were only one or two other countries that have a ‘holding stage’ until provisions are put into place. The Committee decided to defer this discussion and the Chair thanked Dr Bedford for his paper.

12. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be scheduled for Thursday 30 March 2006 and would be arranged by the Secretariat.

The meeting closed at 3:26pm.