

EXPERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DRUGS MEETING

Thursday, 27 July 2006, 9:00am – 1.30pm
Khandallah Room, Level 1, Old Bank Arcade, Cnr Willis Street & Customs
House Quay, Wellington

MINUTES

EACD MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr Ashley Bloomfield (Chair)	Dr Geoffrey Robinson
Dr Keith Bedford	Professor Doug Sellman
Paul Campbell	Don Allan (Police) on behalf of Peter Marshall
Dr Stewart Jessamine	

SECRETARIAT ATTENDING

Chris Laursen	Clare Van der Lem
Bruce Atmore	Olivia Tuatoko

1. WELCOME

Dr Bloomfield welcomed members, and a special welcome to Don Allan, Detective Inspector, National Bureau of Criminal Intelligence who was attending on behalf of Peter Marshall.

Keremete Warbrick has signalled that he will tender his resignation. The Chair requested that the Committee consider possible candidates for the vacant consumer representative position.

2. APOLOGIES

Keremete Warbrick, Dr Helen Moriarty, Clinical Associate Professor Tim Maling, Peter Marshall, and Rajesh Chhana

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 30 March 2006.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2006 were confirmed as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

The Chair advised that the minutes were currently being placed on the website.

5.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD 30 MARCH 2006

Report on actions arising from 30 March 2006

5.1 *Minute item 5.3 Nitrous Oxide (NOS)*

The Chair advised the Committee on the problems associated with the recreational use of Nitrous Oxide (NOS) and the current process in place to clear NOS imports. The Committee acknowledged that NOS use was a problem and noted that NOS is a prescription medicine under the Medicines Act 1981 but is not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. There are anecdotal reports of people experiencing problems when importing NOS for previously “bona fide” uses in drag racing and catering.

The Committee agreed that New Zealand seems to have a specific problem with illicit NOS use, and may need to have another look at the volume of Nitrous Oxide currently being imported and what kind of companies are involved.

5.2 *Minute Item 5.5 Methamphetamine Activities*

Methamphetamine was discussed under agenda item 7.

5.3 *Minute Item 5.6 BZP*

BZP was discussed under agenda item 9.

5.4 *Minute Item 6 LSD*

The Chair distributed a letter that was sent to the Minister outlining the substantive issue of apparent anomalies in the classifications of some substances. For example, the classification of LSD as a Schedule 1 drug can be considered an anomaly when it is compared to the Schedule 1 classification of methamphetamine, which is considered to pose a very high risk of harm. The letter sought the Minister’s view on whether he would like further advice on this issue.

The Committee discussed the setting of clear criteria for classifying drugs under different schedules. It was noted that making an assessment of one drug at a time does not address apparent anomalies, and may even create more.

Members agreed the general classification framework that has evolved is reasonable but problems had arisen when additional schedules were added over a long period of time and under different frameworks. Notably, when new drugs are considered the current anomalies become increasingly apparent.

The Committee requested that the Secretariat investigate the work that has been done in the United Kingdom (as noted on the article entitled 'the tale of two Es'), and use it as a basis for a paper to inform a discussion at the next meeting on a more rigorous criteria for classifying drugs.

Action:

The Secretariat is to develop a paper identifying possible criteria for assessing drugs drawing particularly on the work undertaken in the UK.

5.5 *Minute Item 7 Zopiclone*

The Chair noted the lack of information on Zopiclone since the 30 March meeting. The Secretariat reported that no replies from manufacturing companies have been received and a reminder letter has since been sent out.

5.6 *Minute Item 8 Norephedrine*

Norephedrine is still in the process of a formal assessment.

5.7 *Minute Item 9 Methylone Trials*

Chair provided the Minister with advice on scheduling options, stating that no consensus has been reached. The Minister expressed a view that clear evidence of harm would be needed to classify methylone as a B2 and that a C7 classification is appropriate until further evidence of harm becomes available.

Action:

The Chair is to write to the Minister and provide advice on the best holding classification for methylone until further information on harm is collected.

6. UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION

The Secretariat outlined the United Nations Drug Conventions to which New Zealand is a party and summarised the relevant New Zealand legislation. It was noted that there is discretion as to how New Zealand can regulate specific drugs within its own legislation as long as the justification is clear.

7. METHAMPHETAMINE UPDATE

Dr Bedford provided a summary paper on Methamphetamine trends. This was produced from the cases logged by the ESR Drugs and Clandestine Laboratory Teams. The numbers reported by ESR may differ slightly from Police figures because of the differences in the way clandestine laboratory cases are defined.

Dr Bedford noted that methamphetamine manufactured in New Zealand could be just as pure as the crystal methamphetamine seized through importation.

8. 2CT7

Dr Bedford outlined the legal status of 2C-T-7 and suggested that it would be useful to amend the Misuse of Drugs Act by adding “and/or alkylthio radicals” to sub-section (d) under “Amphetamine Analogues”. Such an amendment would include 2C-T-7 in the definition of an amphetamine analogue.

The chemical structure of 2C-T-7 has some relationship to recognised hallucinogens however; 2C-T-7 is not currently a problem in New Zealand. 2C-T-7 has been widely reported in illicit drug seizures overseas and if 2C-T-7 is introduced into New Zealand its current legal standing would be unclear.

The Committee agreed with the proposal and recommended that further legal advice from the Ministry of Health be obtained.

Action:

The Ministry of Health is to request advice on the legal status of 2C-T-7 as a controlled drug analogue in the current legislation.

9. BZP RESEARCH

The Committee discussed the findings of the SHORE study: “Legal party pill use in New Zealand: Prevalence of use, availability, health harms and ‘gateway effects’ of benzylpiperazine (BZP) and trifluoromethylphenylpiperazine (TFMPP)”.

The Committee noted and discussed the key findings of the study.

Committee members discussed the relative risks involved in taking BZP products for weight loss purposes rather than recreational use. The Committee agreed to wait until the results of other current BZP research projects become available and to consider all the available new evidence before providing further advice to the Minister.

Action:

The Chair is to write to the Minister outlining the need to wait for the results of the other BZP research studies before further advice can be provided.

10. METHYLONE UPDATE

Methylone was discussed in agenda item 5.7. The Committee agreed to provide a recommendation to the Minister.

11. GENERAL BUSINESS

- 11.1** Dr Bedford provided a paper on Indan(e)s and Aminoindan(e)s. Although not currently a problem in New Zealand, these are part of illicit drug literature and are used primarily as stimulants. The Committee agreed that there is a need for a more formal assessment on the information available on these chemicals.

Action:

The Secretariat is to provide an assessment of Indan(e)s and Aminoindan(e)s for further discussion.

- 11.2.** It was requested that Thalidomide be discussed at a future meeting as part of a possible anomaly in the Misuse of Drugs Act Schedules. The Schedules could be amended by either lowering the classification of Thalidomide or removing it from the Misuse of Drugs Act altogether. Thalidomide is currently classified as a Schedule 1 drug based on historical reasons rather than its potential as an illicit drug of abuse.

Action:

The Secretariat is to consider a paper for the Committee on Thalidomide.

- 11.3** The Secretariat updated the Committee on possible options for implementing further regulations and controls over BZP.

12. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, 29 November 2006 and would be arranged by the Secretariat.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm.