



## Office of Hon Peter Dunne

MP for Ohariu

Minister of Internal Affairs

Associate Minister of Health

Associate Minister of Conservation

Mr Russell Brown  
russb@dubwise.co.nz

Dear Mr Brown 

I read your 6 May 2015 article, *Synthetic cannabis; it just keeps coming*, posted on the *public address* website with interest.

The article appears to imply that there is a significant underground market in synthetic cannabinoids, and contrasts this with my statement on *The Nation*, where I stated that I was advised that this market was “comparatively small”. Although the exact size of the underground market is difficult to quantify due to limited data and knowledge, I believe that your article somewhat overstates the issue of synthetic cannabinoids. While I in no way disagree that an underground market exists, my comment was referring to the pre-Psychoactive Substances Act period, and I stand by the statement that the availability of psychoactive products has significantly reduced from that time.

You mention, in your article, several substances that were found by ESR; namely MDPV, Alpha-PVP and members of the NBOMe family. Although your article gives the impression that these substances are synthetic cannabinoids, MDPV and Alpha-PVP are actually controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 (MoDA). NBOMes are currently unapproved psychoactive substances under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2013 pending advice from the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs on their status under MoDA, which I expect to recommend scheduling under this Act.

I have received the following advice regarding synthetic cannabinoids from the Office of the Psychoactive Substances Regulatory Authority (the Office) which I trust will be informative.

In April 2015, The Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) advised the Office that since July 2014 the ESR Drugs Team have analysed samples and identified ten synthetic cannabinoids. The Office advises that:

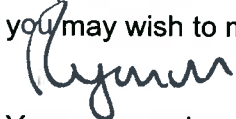
- four of the substances were issued Temporary Class Drug Notices under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975, prior to the Psychoactive Substances Act 2013 (the Act)
- three of the substances were issued interim product approvals under the Act
- only three of the substances were new, in that the substances were not previously subject to a Temporary Class Drug Notice or issued an interim product approval under the Act.

I am advised that the most common synthetic cannabinoids detected in the community over that time all had interim product licences prior to 8 May 2014, and therefore are not new to the New Zealand market. Further monitoring will help clarify if the market is dominated by leftover interim products or if there is a different source of supply.

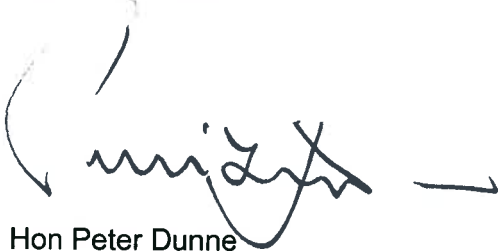
Psychoactive substances information can be found at: <http://psychoactives.health.govt.nz/>. Enquiries to the Psychoactive Substances Regulatory Authority can be made via this email address: [psychoactives@moh.govt.nz](mailto:psychoactives@moh.govt.nz)

I have followed your comments on the issue of psychoactive substances with interest over the last few years, and have found them to be generally balanced and reasoned. However, on this occasion I felt your article did not provide an accurate assessment of the current state of affairs.

I hope the information I have included in this letter is of assistance for any future comment you may wish to make on the issue.



Yours sincerely



Hon Peter Dunne  
**Associate Minister of Health**