

SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS

516. Mr J.R. QUIGLEY to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the latest action by Hon Phil Edman in which he told the media that he would be inhaling what he thought was a synthetic drug and to the minister's warning email urging him to hand his contraband over to the police.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the makers of the product that she has warned is contraband also make other joke breath spray products, such as Look and Feel Canadian Instantly breath spray, Instant Irish Accent breath spray, Understand your Mother breath spray and what must be a particularly potent one, the Enjoy your Job breath spray?
- (2) Even if the minister is not aware of these joke breath spray products, does this latest episode not highlight that this government has no idea, or control over, what synthetic drugs are being sold in Western Australia?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

(1)–(2) I thank the member for Butler for this question.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: She is such a funny person!

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member for Butler has raised a very serious issue. The Leader of the Opposition might want to pay attention because it is an issue in his electorate of Rockingham that Hon Phil Edman has highlighted.

Mr M. McGowan: You did nothing! You sent the police into my office.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I would like to get on the record what the government has been doing, because we have not been doing “nothing” as the Leader of the Opposition has alleged. As I described in this place a few days ago, we have formed a grouping of agencies that have responsibility in this area. The Western Australian emerging psychoactive substances review group comprises representatives from WA Police, the Drug and Alcohol Office, the Department of Health's pharmaceutical service, the ChemCentre, the Department of Commerce and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. This group's brief is to review the legislative framework, to investigate and explore further legislative options so that we can have more of an impact in this space, and to manage the broader issues within the Western Australian community regarding the impact of these psychoactive substances.

We are not denying that it is a very problematic area for government. We have also been pushing this through the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, which is a federal forum. The other day I mentioned that on 4 July I will go to a meeting of the Attorneys General and ministers of police of all the states, along with our federal colleagues, at which we will examine and discuss the outcomes of a paper on a national response to this issue. We believe that we need to have a multitiered approach to get rid of the scourge of these psychoactive substances being peddled in our community. We have not been sitting on our hands. In the interim we have been using a somewhat cumbersome mechanism by which we have declared the psychoactive substances as new chemical formulations of these drugs come into the sphere. WA Police is active in seizing these products; it has already seized over 15 kilograms of this product just in the Peel area. If those psychoactive substances are on our list of prohibited chemicals, we proceed with charges and confiscate assets and cash that are the proceeds of those sales. We are doing a lot. I understand that it is a slow and difficult process to get the correct legislative response, but we want to get it correct so that we can stop the peddlers of these poisons who sell them to children in our communities. We want to make sure that we have the right response so that the peddlers of these drugs cannot find a loophole in the legislation that we will put forward and find a way to exploit our vulnerable children.