

CANNABINOID SUBSTANCES — BAN

366. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Health:

I first acknowledge the year 6 students in the gallery from St Simon Peter Catholic Primary School in the electorate of the member for Ocean Reef. I might add that this school is educating four of my nephews and doing a good job.

In today's *The West Australian* I see that people are being invited by a particular nightclub to smoke the drug Kronic ahead of its becoming illegal. Could the minister update the house on the irresponsibility of these actions and also the potential side effects of this drug?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

I thank the member for the question, and I am glad to have the opportunity to answer it. In a media interview on a different issue this morning—in fact, the member for Scarborough's grievance—I got one small fact slightly wrong and this will give me the chance to correct that.

As members know, the government announced on Monday that there would be a ban on the use of cannabinoid substances that are sprayed onto spices that give a cannabis-like effect to those who smoke them—items such as Kronic and Spice. The government—I think most other governments in this country are about to follow our lead—has decided to ban the use of this substance, using the Poisons Act as the vehicle to do so. The government announced on Monday that it would be banned; the ban would occur four days from that time. For those up there in the press gallery, that was the bit I got wrong, thinking it was four days from Friday. It will be banned officially from midnight tomorrow night, Friday, as published in the *Government Gazette*. From that time on, prosecutions of those who use it can occur.

The question relates to an invitation put out over the internet to come to a venue called The Bakery, which is managed by Artrage, to inhale the last of their supplies of Kronic. My view, which is shared by the Premier and others, is that this is an inappropriate action promoting the use of drugs. Even though the ban does not come into effect until midnight Friday, the government made it clear on Monday that it would be banned because this is a dangerous substance that causes physical harm to people who smoke it.

Mr J.N. Hyde: You should have banned it straightaway.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We did not have to; there was no way to do that.

Mr J.N. Hyde: Now you are blaming The Bakery for your mistake. Gutless!

Dr K.D. HAMES: No; I make it clear —

The SPEAKER: There is a process in this place, and the member for Perth knows how it works. I formally call the member for Perth to order for the first time today.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I make it clear that it is not the fault of The Bakery that this has occurred. In fact, The Bakery has been extremely cooperative since it made some comments in today's newspaper, which I think should not have been made, to the effect that this is art, and people are free to express their views on art in any way they want. Holding a Kronic party is no different from having a marijuana-smoking party or a cigarette-smoking party in a venue that is funded by the state government. The paper suggested that Artrage is funded by Healthway; that is not the case. Healthway ceased its funding to Artrage a year ago with some level of dissatisfaction with that organisation. Artrage is still funded by the Department of Culture and the Arts, for which the Minister for Culture and the Arts has responsibility; he took action and sent to the director of Artrage a very strong letter dated 16 June that was severely critical of its decision to have a function at which people were going to have a party and smoke the remnants of these substances. Since then, a letter has come back from Marcus Canning, the director and CEO of Artrage, strongly supporting the view of the minister. In the interests of public safety, the police will ban that event that was proposed for tonight. That event is now not on. The Bakery is closed for the 24-hour period during which the event was to occur, so that we can ensure that that sort of action is not going on, certainly in a venue run by an organisation that is sponsored by state government. That action is not appropriate. The use of this substance is not appropriate, which is why this government has acted very swiftly—the first in Australia—to ban these substances in Western Australia.