

SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS — CORRESPONDENCE

251. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Police:

I refer to correspondence between the minister's office and a mother begging for intervention over two shops in Rockingham selling synthetic cannabinoids, and the written response by the minister's chief of staff to the mother stating —

Police spoke with the owner and staff who stated all items sold were only intended for use with legal substances such as natural oils, incense, or tobacco.

- (1) Is it normal practice for police to carry out inspections and politely ask drug suppliers if they are selling illegal substances?
- (2) Does the minister believe that products clearly labelled by the Cloud 9 shop as "Blue Magic" and "Doctor Evil" and priced at \$70 for three grams are natural oils, incense or tobacco?
- (3) Is the minister aware that after the mother made her report to police, her son's car was searched, a packet labelled "Shazam" was seized, and her son was charged by police with possessing an illegal substance?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

- (1)–(3) The member raises the really important issue of synthetic drugs, which are a problem. The government has acknowledged that it is an issue that needs to be addressed. With respect to the specifics of the case that the member talked about, the business is not allowed to sell or be in possession of substances prescribed under the act as having the chemical composition that fits the criteria for synthetic drugs—I have forgotten the name of the schedule, so I hope the member can forgive me. It is technical. If police find people in possession of that substance, it is an offence and that person will be prosecuted. While it is a shame that the mother reported that her son was purchasing an illegal substance from those premises, if he is in possession of the illegal substance, of course, the police are going to prosecute him. With respect to the premises, the difficulty that police have—we have talked about it ad nauseam—is that the packaging changes and the chemical composition of the drugs change.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The people selling these substances are very clever, which is why the Minister for Mental Health in the other place is in the process of drafting some amendments to the Criminal Code. The minister has responsibility for the state's drug and alcohol strategy. She is in the process of drafting amendments to the Criminal Code that will clear up this matter irrevocably so that police will know they can execute a search warrant on premises selling any substance in this grouping of substances. That process is in train. The member is aware of it.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the first time! Have you completed, minister?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have just about completed, Mr Speaker.

We have talked about this matter before. The work is in train. The legislative amendment is being progressed by the Minister for Mental Health, and I hope that we can bring it to Parliament very quickly.