

MEDIA RELEASE

Shane Rattenbury MLA, ACT Greens Member for Molonglo

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Greens propose health-focused approach to drug regulation

ACT Greens MLA, Shane Rattenbury, today called on the Legislative Assembly and the Government to investigate a new approach to the regulation of synthetic psychoactive substances.

Mr Rattenbury said that the model recently adopted in New Zealand is based on the principle of harm minimisation and sets up a legal framework for the testing, manufacture, sale and regulation of psychoactive products.

“This model reverses the onus of proof so the manufacturer who wants to sell the substances must prove they are ‘low risk’ before they can be sold as well as regulating advertising of the products, and it setting up a system of health warnings for active products,” said Mr Rattenbury.

“The law and order response of systematically banning new substances could actually be making the problem worse, with manufacturers on the black market tweaking the chemical compounds of synthetic drugs, to create new variations of drugs to get around the bans.

“An ever evolving banned list encourages ever evolving variations of drugs. It’s a pharmacological arms race where the bans are always one step behind.

“In Australia in the last 18 months we have seen the tragic deaths of 5 people linked to synthetic drugs. It’s clear that we have to do something about the problem.

“We need look at a model that is not necessarily tougher on drugs, but smarter on drugs and we need to prioritise the health and safety of the community.

“New Zealand has set up a regulated, scientific and health based approach to psychoactive substances and the results are already evident – with the number of outlets selling psychoactive substances being reduced from three or four thousand to 170.

“We should start the conversation here in the ACT about a more forward-thinking approach to drug regulation. I will work with my state and federal colleagues to investigate options to progress a scientific, health focused approach.

Statement ends

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