ACT Government
Health

MEDIA RELEASE

MR0807

Prohibition of Products containing Synthetic Cannabis

ACT Chief Health Officer Dr Paul Kelly stated today that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) announced that it has taken measures to ban a range of synthetic cannabinoids (synthetic cannabis) under Commonwealth law, which will come into effect from 8 July 2011.

Synthetic cannabis can be found in products with brand names such as Kronic, Northern Lights, Kaos, Karma, Spice, Mango and Voodoo. These products typically contain dried herbs that are sprayed with the synthetic compounds that are then consumed or smoked for their cannabis-like effects.

"The ACT will automatically adopt this ban under local medicines law, and as such, it will be illegal to manufacture, obtain, possess, sell, supply or use products containing synthetic cannabis compounds in the ACT," the Chief Health Officer said.

Synthetic cannabis can pose a public health risk. Like natural cannabis, synthetic cannabis can cause memory and thinking impairment in small doses and heavy and regular use may cause adverse effects including hallucinations, confusion and mental health problems such as anxiety or psychosis.

"In response to the announcement from the TGA on 6 July, the ACT Government has put plans in place to ensure that people in possession of synthetic cannabis products immediately following the ban will not be at risk of penalties.

"The ACT Government has arranged to have an amnesty enacted until 1 August 2011. During this time people will not be prosecuted for offences relating to these products which would otherwise apply following the ban by the TGA.

"During the amnesty period, retailers and consumers in possession of known or suspected synthetic cannabis products may anonymously hand these substances in at their local ACT Police station for safe disposal, without fear of prosecution.

"Despite this amnesty, retailers and their customers are advised not to sell or use these products in light of the ban and their potential risk to health," Dr Kelly concluded.

A letter will also be sent from ACT Health Directorate to local business who are likely to be affected by the ban, regarding arrangements for safe disposal.

Further information regarding the ban on synthetic cannabis can be found at www.health.act.gov.au/healthalerts or by phoning (02) 6205 1700 between Mon-Fri 9:30 - 4:30pm.

Statement Ends/8 July 2011

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