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## 713 INFORMATION SHEET

# LEGAL HIGHS

or **NEDs** “new and emerging drugs”



The term “**legal highs**” may be in common use but as they are often not legal and are constantly changing contents to stay ahead of the law, the term NEDs advocated by the Australian Drug Foundation, is preferable. Users often refer to synthetic cannabis, Black Widow, Herbal Highs, Party Pills, Skunk, Galaxy Ultra Nova, Bath Salts, Spice, Ivory soft, Ice Blazeable and many others. On June 9 2013 the Minister for Fair Trading in NSW announced an interim ban on 19 named synthetic drugs under Section 109 of Australian Consumer Law. The ban is in place for up to 90 days following a NSW Parliamentary Legal Affairs Report, Law Reform Issues, regarding synthetic drugs. Following this the NSW Government has had a crackdown and 1000 retailers (including tobacconists and adult stores) have been visited. The Department for Fair Trading is also monitoring various websites selling the drugs and gathering information about various suppliers. South Australia has also placed a ban on 19 synthetic drugs. The other States and the ACT are supportive and will be following a similar pattern. However, States believe that the Federal Government must enforce a permanent national ban before the 90 day period has expired.

### What are the dangers?

**Case 1** -Remember recently the media detailing the death of 17 year old Henry of Killara, Sydney, who allegedly took some **synthetic LSD**, then he told his family he could fly and fell from the third floor balcony?

**Case 2** In Newcastle, NSW, A 27 year old young woman who works in data processing used to smoke synthetic cannabis. A drug which, she says, kept turning up at parties. You could buy it online or over the counter in shops, so she thought it was safe. She used a very small amount but it got worse every time she used. The last time she had one puff from a bong and was hyperventilating and disconnected to reality. Terrified, she thought her brain was permanently damaged and that she was going to die. This young woman has now stopped smoking synthetic cannabis as has her boyfriend and welcomes the ban introduced by the Government.

**Case 3** - The bride killed by bath salts - the new 'legal high' Ivory Wave drug that's sweeping Britain

So happy: But newlywed Sarah Forsyth's marriage and health were devastated by Ivory Wave bought from an internet site which advertised the product for weight loss. Since October last year, she had been regularly buying and using a legal substance called Ivory Wave because she felt that she was seen as being too fat in her wedding photos. Within months of taking her first hit, their happy, healthy, newlywed daughter had become a paranoid, aggressive agoraphobic, insomniac. Sarah had the weight loss changing from a size 16 to a size 6 but by then she was addicted. Although the coroner is yet to record his verdict, her parents lay the blame for her death firmly at the drug's door. They insist the

powerful powder-form legal drug, sold in about \$20, 500mg bags on the internet and over the counter in specialist herbal shops, destroyed Sarah's mental and physical health with terrifying speed. They are convinced it caused severe swelling and irreparable damage to her brain and raised her heart rate to such a level that when she was taken off life-support it gave up under the strain.

**Case 4** - Just two weeks ago, the drug - also known as Ivory Coast, Purple Wave or Vanilla Sky - was linked to the death of a young man in the Isle of Wight and in recent months has hospitalised dozens more.

Ivory Wave is marketed as bath salts or plant food and is labelled 'not for human consumption' to circumvent strict laws governing the supply of pharmaceuticals in Britain.

**Case 5**- In New Zealand a young man drowned after he smoked K2 synthetic cannabis at a beach near Palmerston North. The man and his mates bought "party pills" at a High St shop and washed them down with rum. This shop has now closed but sells the pills online.

The cases mentioned are just a sample of what is happening worldwide. Many more people have needed hospital treatment.

**The New Zealand Government has placed temporary bans on 33 substances.**

**In Europe**, 280 potentially harmful "legal highs" are being monitored by the EU's drug agency. They say that there is a thriving "legal highs" business with low risks and high profits operating 690 online sites and specialised shops. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction say that the internet has created new routes for supply and use. The market is dominated by drugs made in laboratories in China and India and many are synthesised from obscure chemical groups.

NEDS cannot be sold legally as a drug, so they are often sold with the absurd names listed above. They are sold as powders, pills or capsules and fall into 3 categories

- Stimulants
- Downers or sedatives
- Psychedelics or hallucinogens

They may be snorted or swallowed or even injected which in itself raises other risks of sharing needles and spreading a virus such as HIV or hepatitis C

Throughout Australia these synthetic drugs are being widely used by young people. An analysis of testing on privately run mine sites across the state found that one in ten workers had positive readings to synthetic drugs. A combination of young men, synthetic drugs and operating machinery or vehicles is not a positive workplace. However, testing methods for synthetic drug use are not as advanced and reliable as the methods used for alcohol and other drugs.

In the 1990's a relevant law was changed – the Federal Government then had the power to place immediate bans on the importation of any substance deemed by the relevant minister to be a danger to the community.

Bob Spanswick, former national secretary of the Customs Officers Association, says his organisation has had their tools taken from them. “We need the power we had before to stop the problem” says Bob

Legal highs? Or NED’s? Or are they just **LETHAL DRUGS** not for human consumption?

*Information from-*

*The Australian*

*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*

[www.drug-free.org/join-together/drugs](http://www.drug-free.org/join-together/drugs)

[www.talktofrank.com/drugs/legalhighs](http://www.talktofrank.com/drugs/legalhighs)

*The New Zealand Herald*

*NSW Fair Trading*

*The Guardian – <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/28/legal-highs-european-drugs-experts>*

*Australian Drug Foundation*

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