



9 August 2010

Ms Mary Maguire
Meetings Administrator
Corporate Services Department
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Dear Mary

I wish to refer to your letter of 10 February 2010 concerning "head shops" and apologise for the delay in replying.

In light of the health risks associated with some of the products being sold in head shops, the Government made an Order on 11 May 2010 declaring a number of substances, commonly referred to as "legal highs", to be controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977, with immediate effect.

Approximately 200 individual substances were controlled by this legislation. The substances controlled include:

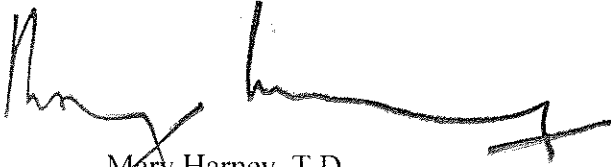
- synthetic cannabis-type substances (contained in SPICE products),
- BZP-related substances (sold as party pills),
- Mephedrone and similar substances (sold as bath salts or plant food),
- GBL and 1,4 BD (often referred to as liquid ecstasy).

It is now a criminal offence for a person to import, export, produce, supply or possess these legal high substances. The legislation introduced in May has had a significant impact on head shops, removing the vast majority of their products from the market, and as a consequence a large number of head shops have closed.

I am aware that since these substances were brought under control, other substances have been coming onto the market that are currently not subject to controls under the Misuse of Drugs Act. My Department is working closely with the Department of Justice and Law Reform, the Gardai, the Customs Service, the Forensic Science Laboratory, the Irish Medicines Board, and others to monitor closely the emergence of new psychoactive substances. I will not hesitate to seek Government approval to ban additional substances if any of them pose a risk to public health.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Harney', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mary Harney, T.D.
Minister for Health and Children