

Media release

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HASANZ URGES GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER WORK IMPACTS IN CANNABIS BILL

With less than a month until the referendum on cannabis, a health and safety industry group is urging the Government to consider the impact on work if the legal status of taking recreational cannabis changes.

While the Health and Safety Association of New Zealand (HASANZ) has no position on the upcoming referendum, it believes that the Cannabis and Legalisation Control Bill as its currently drafted, risks leaving New Zealand organisations confused and unclear about how to manage cannabis as a legal substance in a work environment.

“For the referendum information to say that other laws, namely the Health and Safety at Work Act, already cover working while impaired, does not go far enough,” says HASANZ Executive Director Philip Aldridge.

“Regardless of the referendum result next month, cannabis will remain one of many impairment risks in our workplaces,” says Mr Aldridge.

“This is a prime opportunity for Government to support the regulator, WorkSafe NZ, to work with industry to develop guidelines, or a clear position statement around cannabis as an impairment risk.”

“We believe that without this work, a significant risk remains of organisations across New Zealand taking an ad hoc and potentially inadequate approach to managing cannabis as an impairment risk.”

“If recreational cannabis is legalised, additional resources will be required to support New Zealand businesses and health and safety professionals to understand the potential impacts, as well as educate, inform and support them to manage cannabis as a legal substance.”

International experience shows that when organisations have a thorough impairment policy in place, and a supportive work culture, they are more likely to be successful in managing cannabis as a legal substance.

“Impairment can be caused by a multitude of factors, and impairment caused by cannabis needs to be addressed in the workplace as part of a comprehensive impairment policy which is developed in the spirit of participation, engagement and consultation to ensure it is fit for purpose,” says Mr Aldridge.

ENDS

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