

ACMD

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

Chair: Professor Sir Michael Rawlins
Secretary: Will Reynolds

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Rt Hon Jacqui Smith
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14th July 2008

Dear Home Secretary,

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, review of MDMA (ecstasy)

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) has undertaken to provide reviews of the positioning of individual drugs in the classification system of the Misuse of Drugs Act. This undertaking was outlined in our response to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report 2006.

The ACMD has started its series of reviews by considering the drug MDMA (ecstasy). Our colleagues in the forensic services have, for some time, provided data that demonstrates MDMA is now the most widely found active ingredient in 'ecstasy like' drugs that are seized. Other drugs that have historically been found as active ingredients of 'ecstasy' (e.g. MDA, MDEA) are now not widely used. Therefore, the primary focus of our review will be MDMA and its associated harms.

The Council is currently preparing its advice to government, which will include advice on harms and prevention of harms caused by the drug in addition to issues relating to classification. Our advice will be provided as a published review to be provided to government (in advance of publication) in December 2008 or January 2009.

The ACMD have prepared the Terms of Reference for the review which I enclose with this letter. I have also convened a sub-group of ACMD members with the role of overseeing the process of evidence gathering, analysis and

reporting.

As part of this review the Council plans to hold an evidence gathering meeting on the 26th September at which the Council will have the opportunity to hear from and question experts on ecstasy use and harms. In line with our approach to openness and transparency this session, which will mainly comprise of presentations and data that are already in the public domain, will be held in public. A second session will be held in private where evidence of a sensitive nature or unpublished statistics may be presented and the deliberations of the Council, leading to recommendations, will take place.

I am aware that, since the announcement of my appointment to the chair of the ACMD from November this year, the media have reported on the evidence that I gave to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee in 2006 in relation to the position of ecstasy in the classification system. This evidence was given based on my academic work at the time. However, I can provide you with my total assurance that I am personally approaching the ACMD review with an open mind, drawing on all evidence that is available to the Council, and when it comes to reporting, representing the views of the Council as a whole.

I will, of course, keep you informed of the review and would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss the issues of the ecstasy review and my forthcoming position as Chairman.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Nutt', with a stylized, wavy line extending to the right.

Professor David Nutt

Chair of the ACMD Technical Committee, ACMD Chair designate

Cc: Vernon Coaker

Professor Sir Michael Rawlins

Professor Paul Wiles