



## LEGAL HIGHS: THE SALVATION ARMY'S STAND ON PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

The Salvation Army is concerned that there is a growing availability of un-researched psychoactive drugs in Aotearoa New Zealand. The synthetic drug known as 'Kronic' is now easily purchased over the counter of many of our country's local dairies. The Salvation Army is very concerned that even while these psychoactive drugs carry an 'R18' classification, with glossy packaging and names like 'Aroma', 'Dream,' 'Pineapple Express', 'Puff' and 'Purple Haze', they seem to be deliberately marketed at young people. Recently some dairies have been caught selling the drug 'Kronic' to minors (See *The New Zealand Herald*, Monday 7 June 2011), while some secondary schools and youth agencies have started to report that they're seeing an increase in the number of high school students using these so-called 'legal highs' (see *The New Zealand Herald*, Friday 10 June 2011; and 17 June 2011)

The Salvation Army agrees with the Law Commission's Report on *Controlling and Regulating Drugs—A Review of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975*, in which the Commission calls for:

'...an end to the sale of new psychoactive substances until such products have been assessed and approved by a new drug regulator. Currently the sale of synthetic psychoactive substances such as 'Kronic' and 'Puff' is completely unregulated creating what the Commission believes is an 'unacceptable' level of risk to the public.' (cited in the media release of the *Review of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975*).

The Salvation Army's longstanding involvement in Courts and Prisons and our work in the rehabilitation of drug addictions has made us acutely aware that the social impact of drug

usage is never only limited to matters of public health. Principal Youth Court Judge Andrew Becroft has linked the new psychoactive drug 'Kronic' to criminal reoffending, and we agree with Judge Becroft, that while purchasing it and other psychoactive drugs in dairies can be 'frighteningly easy and straightforward—like buying a newspaper or a litre of milk'—the connection in-between psychoactive drugs, criminal behaviour and social harm is only likely to worsen.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army strongly recommends that:

- 'Kronic' and other psychoactive drugs are immediately removed from general public sale, and especially from sale in dairies.
- Local Councils, in cooperation with the Police, Drug Treatment Services and Youth-Worker NGOs, partner to educate and monitor dairy-owners and other specialised retailers of psychoactive drugs.
- The Government sponsors a national media campaign to educate the general public, especially parents and young people, on the risks of using psychoactive drugs.
- The Government extends the funding available for specialised treatment services.
- The Government adopts, in its entirety, the Law Commission's Report on *Controlling and Regulating Drugs—A Review of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975*.
- The Government, when adopting the Misuse of Drugs Act, considers placing the onus on the drug suppliers to prove a drug does *no harm* rather than on the public having to prove that it does harm before it can be removed from sale.