



People's Panel: Legal High Retail Location Policy Survey

8 September 2015

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1. Key findings of People's Panel Legal High Retail Location survey

There were 270 responses to this survey.

- 83 panellists agreed with sensitive sites as defined and this was the most common comment for the sensitive site question.
- 16 panellists wanted the bottom of View Street included as a sensitive site as it is too close to Otago Girls High School.
- Some panellists also suggested adding Queens Garden (5), Anzac, Toitu and behind the Railway Station (6) as sensitive sites. Nine questioned why places of worship are included as sensitive sites.
- 91 agreed with the buffer zones as defined. 23 wanted larger buffer zones while others said they were unable to comment properly due to difficulty reading the map.
- Most comments about the effect of the proposed policy were that it would not affect them at all. Some noted that it would be more dangerous in central city and their fear for safety at night, while others were worried about the effects on the wider community.
- Most common general comments about the sales of legal highs in Dunedin reiterated the complete ban of them. Some panellists wanted the restrictions to be as tight as possible, and others commented on the DCC's fair approach and work towards the policy.
- There was a small number of comments throughout the survey suggesting the proposed policy is too restrictive: eight suggested legalising marijuana with restrictions; four suggested smaller buffer zones; four had no objection to sales of legal highs; and two commented that if legal highs posed 'low harm' then there would be no problem.
- There were many comments throughout the survey about banning the sale of legal highs.*

*Note that banning the sale of legal highs is outside the remit of local authorities.

2. Background

2.1 Survey Background

The Council is proposing to set out where legal highs (commonly referred to as 'party pills' or 'synthetic cannabis') can be sold within Dunedin. The proposed Legal High Retail Location Policy will effectively ban sale of legal highs outside of the central city and within 100m of sensitive sites such as education facilities, churches, libraries, hospitals, mental health facilities and justice premises. The purpose of this survey is to find out what panellists think of the proposed legal high retail location policy.

2.2 About the Dunedin People's Panel

The Dunedin People's Panel aims to provide an opportunity for people in Dunedin to get involved with a range of Dunedin City Council issues, giving feedback by completing online surveys.

The Panel ideally supplements other research, using consultation to provide public perceptions to help inform decision-making processes. Panellists are recruited to be 'typical' members of the public – that is they come from a range of backgrounds and have a range of involvement with the DCC.

The People's Panel is not a statistically representative sample of the Dunedin population because panellists choose to sign up. The DCC encourages representation from a variety of groups on the Panel to obtain a wide range of views and continues to improve participation from groups that are under-represented. At the time of surveying, there were 1,462 people registered with the Panel including residents of each community board area and a range of age and ethnicity groups. Furthermore, the information provided by the Panellists is not verified.

For more information about the Dunedin People's Panel visit the Panel's website at www.dunedin.govt.nz/peoplespanel.

2.3 Methodology

This survey was open from 25 August to 2 September 2015. In total 270 completed surveys were received.

The feedback has been analysed in two ways:

- For the tick box questions, responses to each option have been reported as proportions of the total sample and presented as charts.
- Responses to open-ended questions ranged from one-word answers to lengthy comments with several points and ideas. Key themes from these comments have been identified and ordered by frequency. A selection of comments has been included in the report, to illustrate these themes.

Please note that results in charts presented in this report may not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed for some questions and/or as a result of rounding.

3. Survey Results

3.1 Sensitive sites

The survey asked *"Have we defined sensitive sites effectively? Would you add or remove any?"*

Table 1 – Definition of sensitive sites	Number of responses
Keep as is/yes/it's okay	83
Ban completely/remove all sites (no sale)	53
Add the bottom of View Street (Otago Girls very close)	16
Restrict to more centralised/one area	10
Don't include places of worship as sensitive sites	9
Add Anzac, Toitu and behind Railway Station	6
Restrict to central city	5
Add Queens Garden as sensitive site	5
Keep out of high traffic/shopping areas	5
Can't judge/never used products	5
Consider cultural sites (museums, cinemas etc.) as sensitive	4
Allow in visible areas with CCTV camera	4
Can't tell from map/no sites by name	4
Consider whole of George Street as sensitive	2
Other	37

Selection of comments:

- *"I think you've done as much as you can to control the situation. Good job."*
- *"Seems OK – nicely restricted at least!"*
- *"Looks sensible."*
- *"I am not in favour of any legal or illegal 'highs' being sold anywhere in Dunedin. Ban the lot!"*
- *"My attitude is to ban the lot, so I don't feel comfortable agreeing to even limited access."*
- *"Quite good. I would remove the allowed area at the bottom of View St as it is very close to OGHS."*
- *"It would appear so, although the area at the bottom of View St seems a bit close to Otago Girl's High School and the Rattray to Dowling St area is used by many school pupils from Kavanagh College and Otago Girls in particular to get to town and to buses."*
- *"It looks correct but wondering whether Queens Gardens should be considered as a special site. Now that the surrounds are becoming more attractive it would be a shame for the Gardens to become a place where people meet because trading in these substances is allowed close by."*
- *"It still leaves a reasonable area available to sellers of the product – with spaces from The Exchange to Hanover St so it would be difficult for them to argue that no suitable sites were provided."*
- *"The areas on George Street that are permitted under this plan are popular places for high school students to congregate while changing buses to and from school. I think we need to keep legal highs away from high school students. These bus stops McDonalds restaurant and the malls are all places where adolescents hang out and therefore should be regarded as sensitive."*

3.2 Buffer zones

The survey asked "Are the proposed buffer zones correct?"

Table 2 – Proposed buffer zones	Number of responses
Yes	91
Not really that far/have bigger zones	23
No	16
Don't know/poor map	15
Ban completely	15
Smaller zones	4
Have shops on main street, can be seen	3
Won't restrict people	3
Have one area only to sell	3
No buffer zones	2
Include Police Station	2
Extend to View Street, Queen's Gardens, Toitu	2
Other	40

Selection of comments:

- "Yes – appropriate to have them all the same."
- "They seem to restrict the sales to a small central area; that I completely agree with."
- "I think they should be larger e.g. 150 or 200 metres around some e.g. schools and mental health services."
- "Buffer zones should be 200m."
- "No idea. Very poor map and explanation of the map!"
- "I would like the buffer zone to come out to include all of the View Street area – I don't think any shops selling these legal (but necessary) highs should be that close to Otago Girls High School or the Moray Place carpark building. The buffer zone should also come right out to protect Queens Gardens, Toitu areas, so people walking to and from their parked cars are safe."
- "No. Add all buffer zones south of Moray Place and adjacent to Anzac Avenue/Queens Gardens/View/Dowling Streets to the prohibited areas as they are too near to high schools and vulnerable teens. This buffer zone is completely unacceptable."
- "The buffer zones need to be larger around schools and high food traffic areas that younger people use."
- "I think buffer zones are irrelevant. People will go to where they are sold if that is what they are after. There may be a tinny house closer and more conveniently located."
- "Seems unfortunate to be selling legal highs in George St, does not suggest a great image of the central city to families shopping or visitors to Dunedin."
- "No, I would limit it to one outlet next door to the Police Station. This outlet and any other outlet should have a fixed term licence only so it can be monitored and renewed only if there are no problems."
- "Yes, any more than 100m and you are effectively forbidding legal high sales."

3.3 Effect of policy

The survey asked *"How would the proposed Policy affect you?"*

Table 3 – Effect of proposed Policy	Number of responses
Not at all/minimal	128
More dangerous in city/less safe at night	21
Affects community	17
Encounter users/a nuisance to others	7
Not go near proposed areas	7
Prefer no selling	6
Waste of money/no good will come out of them	5
Concern about access for children	4
Extra pressure on police and hospitals	3
Glad not sold near home	2
Fewer cases in hospitals	2
Good idea/sensible restrictions	2
Possible affect if family member starts using	1
Family is safer	1
Other	25

Selection of comments:

- *"Wouldn't affect me at all, other than be a source of visual annoyance if I passed such an outlet."*
- *"I don't think it will affect me personally although anything that is harmful to young people, or the public in general, is concerning and potentially affects all of the community."*
- *"Not at all. We do not use legal highs and avoid the Octagon on weekend nights."*
- *"Indirectly... The sale of legal highs in my city means there will be people that I may encounter who are high."*
- *"Legal highs would be available to anyone in Dunedin – once they are on sale, anyone can get hold of them either legally or not – and it is devastating for those who use it, not to mention a waste of money."*
- *"It wouldn't as I have brains and wouldn't touch the stuff. I fear for the young teenagers getting access to this rubbish. It's so wrong to allow this, your energies need to be directed into the real plant cannabis, but this city is too into alcohol and look at the mess that has done."*
- *"It could affect the crime rate in my area and potentially my own children being affected by being brought up with access to these substances."*
- *"Not at all. I'm an adult now. But we should listen to police/ED doctors about intoxicants and harm, they are the ones affected."*
- *"Not at all as I do not purchase legal highs and have no issue with anyone else doing so."*
- *"Because of the type of people these outlets attract I would not feel comfortable walking past any of them."*
- *"Only in that I have seen the social harm caused by these drugs and would be pleased to see them banned outright. I am glad there is to be a low harm test."*
- *"Not at all but a fear for others. I am a nurse and ED is often overflowing with folk who do not 'do' things properly – such as taking legal highs safely."*

3.4 Other comments

The survey asked "Do you have any other comments about the sale of legal highs in Dunedin?"

Table 4 – Other comments	Number of responses
Ban all legal highs	68
Keep restrictions as tight as possible	27
Fair approach/DCC doing its best	21
Dunedin doesn't need legal highs	14
Under close public surveillance/restrict business hours	9
Legalise marijuana with restrictions	8
Congregation of users worrying	5
No object to sales	4
Sell close/in police station	4
Educate/social services provided for users	4
Not enough information on what 'low harm' means	3
If 'low harm' then no problem	3
Exacerbates mental health issues	2
Personal decision to use or abstain	2
Restrict to one small outlet/area	1
Sell in liquor stores	1
Sell in pharmacies	1
Encourage consumption in controlled, social places	1
Other	38

Selection of comments:

- *"Having witnessed behaviours of people affected by these drugs I find the behaviour tends towards violence and anti-social behaviour. I doubt many will consume the drugs where they purchase them. The purchasing restrictions will mean a particular group of people will congregate at times where they are able to be sold. Many people will not find this group of people attractive."*
- *"Dunedin does not need legal highs. The bigger the obstruction the DCC can put in the way the better. They are a curse to good people and their families."*
- *"No, as if allowed by the law, then the DCC is doing the best that it can to minimise the visual presence of retailers."*
- *"I advocate strong limitations, after the terrible problems with synthetic cannabis products."*
- *"I believe they should be banned altogether, but this is a step in the right directions."*
- *"We just need to ban legal highs altogether, we have enough things people can self-medicate on without having one as harmful as legal highs."*
- *"Legalise marijuana, then there would not be any legal highs and if controlled as in some states in USA then can be taxed (\$ to govt.) and tested for quality... but that is another debate."*
- *"I think it is great how the DCC is showing leadership in restricting the locations where legal highs can be sold."*
- *"The only concern I would have is increased havoc in the Octagon on weekend nights. Is it possible to restrict sales to certain times of the day, as with pub closing times, e.g. no sales between midnight and 7am?"*

4. How will the results be used?

The People's Panel findings provided feedback about the proposed legal high retail location policy which sets out where legal highs (commonly referred to as 'party pills' or 'synthetic cannabis') can be sold within Dunedin.

Appendix 1: Respondent Profile

	All Respondents n = 270	Percentages (%) n = 100	Census 2006 Data (%)
GENDER			
Female	145	53.7%	52%
Male	121	44.8%	48%
Prefer not to say	4	1.5%	
AGE			
15-24 Years	8	3%	26%
25-34 Years	18	6.7%	14%
35-44 Years	47	17.4%	16%
45-54 Years	68	25.2%	16%
55-64 Years	51	18.9%	12%
65 Years or older	76	28.1%	16%
Prefer not to say	2	0.7%	
ETHNICITY			
European	246	91.1%	74%
Maori	14	5.2%	6%
Pacific Island	2	0.7%	2%
Asian	2	0.7%	5%
Other	15	5.6%	13%
Prefer not to say	9	3.3%	
GEOGRAPHIC AREA			
Andersons Bay/Waverley	19	7%	5%
Blueskin Bay	8	3%	1%
Caversham	7	2.6%	3%
Concord/Corstophine/Kew	9	3.3%	4%
Fairfield	4	1.5%	2%
Green Island/Abbotsford	2	0.7%	4%
Helensburgh/Balmacewen	2	0.7%	1%
Inner City	17	6.3%	6%
Leith Valley	2	0.7%	1%
Maori Hill	13	4.8%	3%
Mornington	17	6.3%	5%
Mosgiel	16	5.9%	8%
Musselburgh/Tainui	7	2.6%	3%
North East Valley	19	7%	5%
Outer Peninsula	5	1.9%	1%
Outram/Momona	5	1.9%	3%
Peninsula	17	6.3%	2%
Pine Hill	8	3%	2%
Port Chalmers/Purakanui	10	3.7%	2%
Roslyn/Belleknowes	10	3.7%	3%
South Coast	10	3.7%	3%
South Dunedin	5	1.9%	3%
St Clair	9	3.3%	3%
St Kilda	9	3.3%	3%
Strath Taieri	0	0%	1%
Taieri	2	0.7%	2%
Three Mile Hill	11	4.1%	5%
University	6	2.2%	7%
Waikouaiti/Karitane	3	1.1%	1%
Wakari	6	2.2%	3%
West Harbour	11	4.1%	3%
Outside Dunedin	0	0%	
I'd prefer not to say	1	0.4%	

Note – the demographic information provided by the Panellists has not been verified.