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Drug Policy Update

Kaupapa Ārai Whakapōauau

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See the
National Drug Policy website

www.ndp.govt.nz



Editorial

Reducing alcohol-related violence

Over the last few years the media has highlighted the impact of methamphetamine, and how it has fuelled violence in New Zealand.

Meth has been used by the perpetrators of some high-profile, serious crimes, and it is a serious new problem. However, it should not divert attention from the most widely abused drug in New Zealand that causes violence, which is alcohol.

In June, I released *Safer Communities: Action Plan to Reduce Community Violence and Sexual Violence*. During consultation on it, community groups and local government overwhelmingly prioritised alcohol-related violence as the problem most needing attention.

This concern is shared across health, social and justice sector agencies. The Police point to alcohol as a major factor in much of the crime they deal with.

The latest *National Survey of Crime Victims* reports that about a third of the victims of partner violence, and nearly half of the victims of sexual violence, thought their offender was affected by alcohol and/or drugs.

According to the *Drinking in New Zealand 2000* survey, nearly one in five men and over one in 10



Hon Phil Goff, Minister of Justice

women aged 14 to 29 reported being physically assaulted in the previous 12 months as a result of someone else's drinking.

We know from local and overseas evidence that alcohol-related violence and disorder tend to occur between 10 pm and 4 am on weekend nights. We also know that although most injuries are minor, more serious injuries such as cuts requiring stitches, broken bones and concussion occur in at least a fifth of assaults. Punching or kicking are most common, but weapons, especially glasses and sometimes knives, are used in at least 10 percent of assaults.

The relationship between alcohol and violence is complex. Although there is strong evidence of an association between alcohol consumption and violent behaviour, no direct physiological link has been demonstrated.

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The association can, however, be related to cultural norms, and the government is funding the Alcohol Advisory Council to implement a culture change programme aimed at addressing our drinking culture.

Violence and crime can also be reduced by removing the opportunity for it to occur.

Factors that can increase the likelihood of alcohol-related violence occurring include a high concentration of single, young (aged 16–29) males ‘out on the town’; a dense concentration of pubs, bars and clubs; bottlenecks where drinkers pass each other on the streets; and cluster points where they compete for services, such as fast food and taxis. Risk factors involving licensed premises include poorly trained and non-vetted door staff; overcrowding; lack of seating; high noise levels; drug use; sexual activity; irresponsible serving practices; and a failure to keep aggressive and/or intoxicated people out.

There are a number of strategies that can be successful in reducing alcohol-related violence, and they revolve around a partnership involving the police, local councils, licensees, the liquor industry, health professionals, hospitals, and local communities.

Among the strategies are policing operations targeted at crime and disorder ‘hot spots’; taking measures to improve the quality and behaviour of door staff; advising bar managers on violence prevention, reinforced by advisers visiting premises shortly after incidents have occurred; and creating an up-to-date database to track incidents, drawing on both Police and hospital sources to identify emerging problems.

The *Safer Communities Action Plan* was developed by the Ministry of Justice’s Crime Prevention Unit. It sets out a series of actions that will assist local partnerships of councils, Police, health professionals, the hospitality industry, transport providers and hospital emergency departments to put in place locally-relevant initiatives to reduce local alcohol-related violence problems.

The causes of and solutions to these problems will be specific to each community. Many will focus on reducing the opportunity for offending to occur.

A National Taskforce for Community Violence Reduction is being set up under the *Action Plan* to manage initiatives on alcohol-related violence, and violence in public places.

The Taskforce will be led by Local Government New Zealand. The rationale is that local government is now responsible under the Local Government Act 2002 for the social, economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing (including safety) of communities. They are also jointly responsible for granting liquor licences (with the Liquor Licensing Authority) and enforcing the Sale of Liquor Act 1989 (with Police and the Ministry of Health).

While there are already initiatives under way at both national and local levels, a consistent approach is needed across the country that also covers alcohol policies and licensing regulations. Not all local authorities and District Licensing Authorities have alcohol policies, and those that exist are of variable quality, and are implemented to varying degrees.

Ideally, all communities should enjoy cooperative partnerships between local authorities, Police, and the business community, and all premises should operate in accordance with the host responsibility guidelines.

All communities should consider whether an alcohol accord would assist in resolving local alcohol-related problems. This is a situation to work towards.

The Taskforce will develop policy and practice guidelines for local-level agencies, such as standard policies for District Licensing Authorities to use when assessing licence applications, identifying problems, enforcing regulations and developing solutions with the wider business and transport sectors.

We know from research that appropriate enforcement of the regulatory framework is necessary to prevent alcohol-related violence and harm. There is concern that the resourcing of enforcement in some communities is not sufficient to ensure the Sale of Liquor Act 1989 is properly enforced.

In response to this concern, the Taskforce will review local responses to liquor control, including the current monitoring and enforcement of the Sale of Liquor Act 1989.

These are just a few of the initiatives that, together with a new environmental design approach to reducing violence and crime, will be overseen by the Ministry of Justice over next two years as part of the government’s ongoing Crime Reduction Strategy.

Acting Against Illicit Drugs

National co-ordinator for Community Action on Youth and Drugs (CAYAD), Evelyn Bennett, describes the pilot workshop on 'P' and other illicit drugs – held in Tauranga in June – as a huge step forward for the community health projects she co-ordinates.

'In the course of the two-day workshop, a united front was demonstrated by CAYAD workers from all over New Zealand on the ongoing youth and drugs issue,' says Bennett.

These sentiments are endorsed by Tauranga's project manager for CAYAD, Paul Stanley, who hosted the workshop.

'The pleasing thing is, although we are from different backgrounds and from regions with different problems, we are all on the same page when it comes to combating the drugs evil that is in our communities,' says Paul.

Considerable weight for CAYAD's campaign was lent by the appearance of Hon Jim Anderton, Chair of the Ministerial Committee on Drug Policy, at a closed workshop session and, later, at a public forum in Tauranga.

He told CAYAD delegates that in the last 30 years New Zealand had sown the wind, and was now reaping the whirlwind.

'As a result of the legacy [of drug and alcohol abuse] we've inherited, the lives of our young people are being treated with contemptuous disdain,' said the Minister.

'I've never liked drugs. As a politician, I've always wanted to create a New Zealand where all our young people can reach their full potential. We need to support them to be all they can be.

'In 30 years' time, I want communities to be safe and secure, not like the dysfunctional communities, families and individuals we see now.'



Minister Jim Anderton, chair of the Ministerial Committee on Drug Policy, launches the new Ngaiteurangi Iwi CAYAD website in Tauranga. Looking on are (from left) drug educator for Ngaiteurangi Iwi, Eddie Rudolph, website designer Russell Farnworth and Ngaiteurangi Iwi project manager Paul Stanley.

He congratulated CAYAD on the work it's doing and for organising the public forum.

'If only one person gets value out of it, it will have been a success.'

Anderton said while it may be fashionable to talk about 'P' and other hard drugs, it should be noted that alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana are causing widespread problems.

'Marijuana is stopping the growth of forestry in New Zealand. There are forestry companies who can't find enough skilled staff because young people are getting stoned all day. Tough love is needed. It's too dangerous to have drugs in forestry.'

Anderton promised he'd do what he could at Government level to ensure CAYAD receives the resources it needs to continue its good work.

'I recognise that combating drug abuse is not a quick fix. It's a long-term process. We are clawing back from 30 years of neglect.'

Conference Weighs up Drug Strategies

The third Australasian Drug Strategy Conference was held in Alice Springs from 4 to 6 May.

Focusing on drug-related law enforcement issues, the conference is held every two years. This year, the conference was jointly hosted by Northern Territory Police and the Australian Federal Police, and attracted keynote speakers from Canada, the United States, Thailand and Australia. About 260 delegates from 11 countries attended the three-day event.

Senior Constable Jason Loye, a Henderson-based liquor licensing officer, was one of the three New Zealand Police staff who attended the conference.

‘It was a great opportunity to learn about the key drug-related issues facing law enforcement agencies across the Tasman, and to find out more about the types of strategies and tactics they use to tackle alcohol and other drug problems’, says Jason. ‘One of the most striking things was how similar many of the issues being faced in Australia are to those we are grappling with here at home,’ he adds.

Jason notes that one of the big themes from the conference was the importance of working in partnership: ‘This is particularly important in an area like liquor licensing, where collaborating with partners from the local council and public health agencies is really the name of the game.’

‘There are also some really good best-practice models out there – for example, the Victorian PartySafe initiative, which takes a systematic approach to managing the risks of out-of-control parties – which we might want to look at picking up over here in New Zealand’, says Jason.

Highlights of the conference included presentations by Deputy Commissioner Garry



Canadian Deputy Police Commissioner Garry Loeppky giving his keynote address at the Alice Springs conference.

Loeppky, pictured above, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, on Canada’s approach to tackling drug problems and the Director of the Australian High Tech Crime Centre, Alastair MacGibbon, describing the use of the Internet to facilitate drug crimes. Other conference sessions which attracted wide interest were those on drink spiking, the impact of MDMA/Ecstasy, and the challenges of dealing with the abuse of volatile substances (eg, solvents and petrol).

A number of university-based researchers also presented at the conference, including Dr Chris Wilkins, from Massey University in Auckland – who has been leading recent research for Police on amphetamine-type stimulants, in particular methamphetamine. Dr Wilkins’ paper reported on survey findings about ‘tinny houses’ in New Zealand, and the implications that the popularity of such ‘drug supermarkets’ has for the use and sale of cannabis and other drugs.

Copies of the papers presented at the third Australasian Drug Strategy Conference are available through the Northern Territory Police’s Internet website http://www.nt.gov.au/pfes/police/community/adsc/conf_papers/index.html.

National Drug Policy Discretionary Grant Fund

The National Drug Policy Discretionary Grant Fund is jointly managed by the Inter-Agency Committee on Drugs (IACD) and the Ministerial Committee on Drug Policy (MCDP).

The fund was established in 2004 to provide a pool of funding for new initiatives or projects which fill gaps in drug policy work. The fund's objectives are to:

- allow the MCDP to fund projects/organisations that meet the funding criteria and that fill a gap that would otherwise remain unfilled due to not meeting a particular agency's funding criteria

- fund high-quality cross-departmental projects, which will support the advancement of Government's National Drug Policy;
- allow for forward planning and fast response, by Government agencies, to changes in current and emerging drug trends.

Administration of the application and assessment

processes will be undertaken by the IACD Secretariat, located at the Ministry of Health, in consultation with the IACD.

Proposals will be invited from all interested organisations and assessed against the objectives identified above and other relevant criteria. Full information is available on the National Drug Policy website www.ndp.govt.nz.

'Growing tobacco control research in New Zealand'

The Tobacco Control Research Symposium was held in Wellington on 15 September 2004 – following the Smokefree Conference on 13 and 14 September at the same venue.

The New Zealand Tobacco Control Research Strategy was launched in 2003. It aims to focus and co-ordinate tobacco control research in New Zealand. Nearly 18 months on, it's time to review the Strategy, see what has been achieved and identify future research priorities.

The Symposium also included a progress report from the Tobacco Control Research Strategy Steering Group, information on the tobacco control research log and email discussion database (under development), and a presentation of the results of the February meeting of tobacco control research experts.

Workshop to prepare for Nouméa

As a way of preparing for the conference at Nouméa, SHORE (Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation) organised a workshop for NGO representatives in the Asia Pacific region held in Auckland on Thursday, 23 September 2004.

This workshop discussed a number of prepared papers on alcohol consumption surveillance and alcohol policy. These papers received feedback from discussants from NGOs within the region and were amended and elaborated where necessary at a follow-up meeting on Friday, 24 September. The amended materials were then submitted for circulation at the conference in Nouméa, 28–30 September.

Release of Consultation Document

– Review of Smoke-free Environments Regulations 1999

On 2 August, Associate Health Minister Damien O'Connor announced the release for public comment of a document discussing health warnings and other information on tobacco packaging.

'We're looking for information to help decide what size and types of warnings should go on tobacco packets,' said Mr O'Connor.

The consultation also covers the disclosure of the ingredients of tobacco products and tobacco smoke, as well as options for reducing tobacco harm, such as regulating harmful ingredients.

'The review will help ensure New Zealand regulations meet the requirements of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which we ratified last year,' Mr O'Connor said.

That would mean increasing the size of warnings on tobacco products to 30 percent or more of the principal display areas, and could include pictorial health warnings showing smoking damage.

The consultation process was in place to ensure interested parties are aware of the review and have a fair chance to comment on the proposals.

'The government will not be making any decisions until after the consultation process is complete and submissions have been carefully considered,' Mr O'Connor said.

Scope of the review

The review covers policy issues concerning health warnings and other information on tobacco packaging, the disclosure of the constituents of tobacco products and their emissions, and the



*Associate Health Minister
Damien O'Connor*

possibility of modifying tobacco products to make them less harmful.

You can find the consultation document, along with other information relating to the review online at www.moh.govt.nz and www.ndp.govt.nz. A hard copy of the consultation document is available from the Ministry of Health.

The objectives of the Review include:

- ensuring that New Zealand complies with the mandatory requirements of Article 11 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, as a minimum
- determining what warnings, messages and other information (including the possibility of pictorial warnings) should optimally be required to be displayed on all tobacco products
- reviewing whether the use of certain terms, descriptors and markings should be regulated or prohibited on the grounds of actual or potential ability to mislead or deceive consumers
- reviewing options for reducing the harm caused by tobacco use.

The Review covers but is not limited to:

- increasing the size of health warnings to 50 percent or more of the principal display areas but not less than 30 percent of the principal display areas (as required by Article 11)
- developing options for health warnings, including options for pictorial warnings
- reviewing the use of terms on tobacco products that might mislead or deceive consumers
- reviewing the disclosure of information to government on tobacco constituents, the constituents of tobacco smoke and additives to tobacco products
- reviewing the information on constituents of tobacco products to be on or inserted in tobacco packaging

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- considering the required references to nicotine/tar/CO levels and whether they provide accurate information
- canvassing options for harm reduction measures including
 - the possible development of a regime for the regulation of novel tobacco products
 - regulating constituents of tobacco.

How you can feed in comments

To give you good background information, the consultation document sets out and summarises information as well as outlining approaches suggested or adopted elsewhere. Questions in the text indicate the issues on which the Ministry would like comment. However, you don't have to limit your comments to these questions. The Ministry welcomes any feedback on the topics that the review covers.

The closing date for receipt of submissions is 5.00 pm, Friday 8 October, 2004.

Post your submission to:

Public Health Directorate
Ministry of Health
PO Box 5013
Wellington
Attention: John Stribling,

or email it to
john_stribling@moh.govt.nz.

Earlier in the year, a paper by three New Zealand researchers was included at a special drug strategy conference in Alice Springs. Michael Webb, Paul Marriott-Lloyd and Marty Grenfell called their paper Banning the Bottle: Liquor bans in New Zealand.

- The paper notes the gradual spread of liquor bans in New Zealand, and the role that police can play to minimise alcohol-related crime and disorder through the proactive enforcement of such local government by-laws.
- Approximately 30 of the country's 72 district or city councils have permanent, year-round liquor bans, and a further 15 councils have introduced seasonal bans at beaches or popular holiday spots, or for specific festivals.
- A critical feature of the liquor ban regime is the power of arrest that police officers have where by-law breaches are detected. Although most liquor ban breaches are resolved by way of a warning or caution, rather than arrest and prosecution, some need further action: in 2003, there were 3915 liquor ban offences. Some criticise the process for inducting people into the formal criminal justice system.
- Benefits include public safety, less crime, fewer traffic offences and cleaner streets.
- Where liquor bans operate most successfully, they reflect a community partnership approach involving police, local authorities, health agencies, and often formal alcohol accords or liquor liaison groups. In many parts of the country, the existence of these close partnership working arrangements are seen to be pivotal to the effectiveness of liquor bans.

You can read the whole of this research paper in the alcohol section of www.ndp.govt.nz

First Meeting on Alcohol and Health in the Pacific

An international meeting on Alcohol and Health in the Pacific took place in Nouméa, New Caledonia from 28 to 30 September 2004. It was the first time such a meeting featuring senior health and government officials has taken place. It was a collaborative effort by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community [SPC], the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health.

The 'Healthy Islands' theme was aimed at converting current knowledge of the abuse and impact of alcohol into healthy action. Alcohol use has increased in the Pacific over the last 50 years. Currently, alcohol represents one of the most significant risks to health globally. The 2002 World Health Report showed alcohol as the leading risk in low mortality countries in the developing world.

In 2003, the SPC established a section in their Public Health Programme to ensure the development of effective practice for alcohol policies, prevention and education. It was anticipated that this First Meeting would be a pivotal opportunity for Member States to review policy, identify plans and outline some concrete actions to address the impact of alcohol.

International technical experts included Peter Anderson and Derek Rutherford from the UK, and Professor Sally Casswell from New Zealand.

Topics and issues covered included:

- history of alcohol use in the Pacific
- current patterns of alcohol consumption
- areas of high risk consumption
- age, sex and group differences in consumption
- social context of consumption
- health and social consequences of current alcohol use
- trade and economic considerations related to alcohol

- alcohol advertising
- development of national policy on alcohol and considerations for the Pacific covering the following:
 - information and education for decision makers and the community
 - prevention for at-risk groups or individuals
 - improving effectiveness of regulatory or legislative programs
 - issues on marketing and availability
 - development of safer drinking environments
 - drink driving issues
 - treatment and intervention for alcohol problems
 - surveillance and research.

By the conclusion of this meeting participants had:

- reviewed current knowledge of alcohol use and patterns of change and development within the Pacific
- identified current policy, plans, regulation or legislation in regard to alcohol within Member States and the region
- considered and recommended options for national and/or Pacific regional strategy
- produced a summary report for governments.

The World Health Organization has made commitments to reducing the morbidity and mortality from alcohol misuse, and strengthening global action in response to alcohol-related harm. Other regions and countries have taken action in comprehensive ways. In addition, the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance has recently been developed to promote good practice globally and to share and network resources for the benefit of individual countries. SPC and WHO are keen to share some of these developments and build on these for the benefit of the Pacific. SPC and WHO plan to collaborate with countries on future plans in this area.