

MINUTES MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON DRUG POLICY (MCDP) MEETING

*Tuesday 31 August 2004
7.30 pm - 8.30 pm*

*Beehive Room 5.5
Parliament Buildings, Wellington*

Ministers present:

Hon Jim Anderton (Chair) – Associate Minister of Health
Hon Phil Goff - Justice
Hon Damien O'Connor - Associate Minister of Health
Hon Ruth Dyson – Associate Minister of Health
Hon Rick Barker – Minister of Customs
Hon Harry Duynhoven – Minister for Transport Safety
Hon Pete Hodgson – Minister of Transport

Apologies:

Hon George Hawkins - Police
Hon John Tamihere Youth Affairs
Hon Steve Maharey – Social Development
Hon Marian Hobbs – Associate Minister of Education

In Attendance:

Hon Lianne Dalziel – Member for Christchurch East

Officials present:

Graeme Gillespie - Health

Chris Laurenson - Health

Helen Hunter - Health

Brendon Baker – Health

Arawhetu Peretini - Health

Alison Stephens - Justice

Alan Smith - Customs

John Parker - Corrections

Monique Leerschool – Youth Development

Heather Jones – Office of Hon Jim Anderton

Jayne Wallis – Office of Hon Phil Goff

Stephan Groombridge – Office of Hon Damien O'Connor

Mike Webb - Police

Sandra Kirby – ALAC

Mike MacAvoy - ALAC

Bruce Asher - Corrections

1) Welcome and apologies

2) Confirmation of minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting on 23 March 2004 were confirmed. The minutes of the 8 October 2003 and 23 March 2004 meetings were authorised to be placed on the NDP website.

3) Alcohol advertising

Hon Damien O'Connor noted that he had decided to defer consideration of alcohol advertising issues and associated papers to a later meeting.

Agreed that Hon Damien O'Connor would bring a paper on options for regulating alcohol advertising in New Zealand to the next MCDP meeting.

4) Minimum purchase age for alcohol

A paper was presented by Hon Jim Anderton outlining both international and New Zealand public health evidence indicating that a higher drinking age would bring public health benefits for the country. Stronger enforcement of the current laws would also be likely to result in a reduction in alcohol related harm for youth.

Hon Phil Goff presented a second paper summarising alcohol-related offending statistics for youth. This paper concluded that statistics for many types of alcohol-related offending had risen since the lowering of the drinking age. However in most cases this was a continuation of a trend that has been continuing for some years or could have been due to changed policing practices.

A wide-ranging discussion followed on:

- enhancing enforcement initiatives
- implementing stronger penalties (such as for second or third convictions for selling to minors)
- making identification checks of young people compulsory
- issue of secondary supply to minors
- liquor licensing regime, including outlet densities and trading hours
- liquor ban by-laws
- resourcing of the Liquor Licensing Authority
- increasing incidences of police needing to take intoxicated people into safe custody
- the role of ALAC's Culture Change Programme, and development of local government toolkit
- the need to follow a multi-faceted approach to reduce alcohol related-harm experience by youth.
- variation in approaches by District Licensing Agencies, and opportunities for the local government sector to play a strengthened role in minimising alcohol-related harm.

Agreed that Police, Justice and Health would report back to the MCDP on issues related to enforcement of liquor laws.

5) Alcohol without liquid

The IACD paper on alcohol without liquid (AWOL) machines was briefly discussed. Hon Damien O'Connor and Hon Rick Barker were keen to take immediate action to prevent any problems relating to the potential use of these machines in New Zealand.

Agreed that

- (a) Customs officials would prepare a paper for Cabinet to issue a Customs Prohibition Order against alcohol without liquid machines.***
- (b) Justice officials would examine whether or not regulations under the Sale of Liquor Act could provide a vehicle for banning this mode of alcohol consumption.***

6) ALAC Culture Change Programme

Hon Damien O'Connor noted that ALAC's levy had been increased to fund a programme to change the culture of drinking in New Zealand.

Agreed that ALAC will report back to the MCDP at its next meeting providing more detail about progress in developing and implementing the Culture Change Programme, including the social marketing component.

7) National Drug Policy Discretionary Fund

The Committee considered the proposed process for awarding grants from the Discretionary Fund and the draft information pack and guidelines for applicants.

Agreed that the process, timelines and information pack for applicants relating to the National Drug Policy Discretionary Fund and presented by IACD official be approved.

8) Misuse of Drugs Act – new schedule

Hon Jim Anderton noted that health officials were considering the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs (EACD) recommendation for a new schedule to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. The purpose of the schedule would be place restrictions on substances assessed by the EACD as being at a low risk of harm but still requiring some control.

Agreed that such a change to the Misuse of Drugs Act would require public consultation and it may not be possible to include in the amendment about to be introduced to Parliament.

9) Alcohol and other Drugs Action Plan – monitoring report

The Committee noted the updates to the Alcohol and other Drugs Action Plan monitoring report.

10) Other business

Hon Jim Anderton updated the Committee on the recent P Alcohol and Other Drug Forum in Tauranga, and the intention that further forums would be held in other Community Action Youth and Drugs programme areas in future.

A brief discussion was held on volatile substance / solvent abuse.

11) Next meeting

The meeting will be arranged by Hon Jim Anderton's office in consultation with other Ministers.