

# matters of substance

AT THE HEART  
OF THE MATTER,  
NZ DRUG  
FOUNDATION.

Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa

Drug use and social policy at the UN

Cannabis law reform's happy failure

A hangover epiphany

Cheaper than water?

February 2011

## Sport under the influence

Alcohol industry sponsorship has been a gold mine for sport in New Zealand, so much so that many clubs say they couldn't survive without it. But what has been the cost to the codes, the players and the general public of alcohol's high profile wherever we compete?


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Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa

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### BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT

Evo Morales was a class act when he chewed a coca leaf at the 2009 UN High Level Session on drugs.

He was announcing Bolivia's wish to abolish articles in the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs that require countries to eliminate the chewing of coca leaves.

"If this a drug, you should throw me in jail," said Morales. "It has no harmful impact... at all in its natural state. It causes no mental disturbances... and it does not cause addiction."

Bolivia's constitution protects coca as part of the country's cultural heritage. Morales' amendment would remove the obligation to prohibit traditional uses of coca, while maintaining the strict global control system for coca cultivation and cocaine.

Coca leaf has been chewed and brewed as tea for centuries in the Andean region. It's a mild stimulant and suppresses hunger, thirst, pain, and fatigue. It helps overcome altitude sickness and is sacred within indigenous cultures.

Yet, the 1961 treaty treats coca exactly as it does cocaine.

History shows including coca in global drug treaties was a flawed decision. In 1949, UN Commission of Inquiry on the Coca Leaf, Head Howard B Fonda said, "We believe the daily, inveterate use of coca leaves

by chewing... not only is thoroughly noxious and therefore detrimental, but also is the cause of racial degeneration... Our studies will confirm the certainty of our assertions and we hope we can present a rational plan of action... to attain the absolute and sure abolition of this pernicious habit."

A 1995 WHO study on coca and cocaine concluded that the "use of coca leaves appears to have no negative health effects and has positive therapeutic, sacred and social functions for indigenous Andean populations."

Morales' amendment will not get a free ride. Some member states, led by the United States, have lodged formal objections arguing that tolerating coca undermines cocaine control. (Ironically, the US State Department's website recommends coca tea for altitude sickness, and its La Paz embassy has been known to serve it to visitors.)

The UN declaration on indigenous peoples, which the US endorsed last December, guarantees the protection of "cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions".

There is no scientific reason to maintain prohibition of traditional coca leaf use. But sadly, when it comes to global drug control there is zero tolerance for anyone who is seen to soften the status quo.

Happy reading, Ross Bell. ■

### FebFast

February, Nationwide

FebFast is an alcohol awareness campaign born in Australia and now under way for the first time in New Zealand. Ordinary New Zealanders taking part are challenged to forgo alcohol during February to raise funds for programmes helping to reduce alcohol and other drug-related harms among young people.

[www.febfast.org.nz](http://www.febfast.org.nz)

### 4th International Conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

2–5 March, Vancouver, Canada

This conference will provide an advanced forum for emerging cutting-edge research, policy and practice that will assist governments' service systems, service providers, parents and caregivers.

[www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca)

### School of Addiction 2011

3–5 March, Auckland

Convened by the Drug and Alcohol Practitioners Association, the School of Addiction will provide skill-based workshops on clinical supervision, gambling and smoking cessation. This is a 'must attend' training opportunity for experienced practitioners.

[www.dapaanz.org.nz](http://www.dapaanz.org.nz)

### Young People, Risk and Resilience: The Challenges of Alcohol, Drugs and Violence Conference

7–8 March, Melbourne, Australia

Young people who use alcohol and other drugs are more likely to participate in high-risk activities, including violent and traumatic incidents such as assaults and committing crimes leading to early involvement in the criminal justice system. Effective interventions and approaches will be discussed to prevent harm towards young people.

[www.aic.gov.au](http://www.aic.gov.au)

### Harm Reduction 2011 Conference

3–7 April, Beirut, Lebanon

The International Harm Reduction Conference has become the key forum worldwide for the dissemination of harm reduction ideas and practice and has helped put harm reduction on the map.

[www.ihra.net](http://www.ihra.net)

### 6th International Conference on Drugs and Young People

2–4 May, Melbourne, Australia

Themed 'Making the Connections', the conference will examine the complexity and interaction of factors that influence young people's lives and will celebrate the role young people play in addressing harm.

[www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)

### Youth Week

21–29 May, Nationwide

Youth Week 2011 will be held once again in the last week of May. Youth Week 2011 is a 9-day week so more weekend days are available for Youth Week fun!

[www.youthweek.org.nz](http://www.youthweek.org.nz)

### 5th Annual Conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy

23–24 May, Utrecht, The Netherlands

This conference is hosted by the Trimbos Institute. Its goal is to share information, findings and methods around drug policy. It will also facilitate collaboration among top international scholars and policy makers who are engaged in drug policy analyses pertaining to drug markets, the harms caused by both supply and demand for drugs and the intended and unintended consequences of drug policy.

[www.trimbos.org](http://www.trimbos.org)

### 6th International AIDS Society (IAS) Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention

17–20 July, Rome, Italy

This is the world's largest open scientific conference on HIV/AIDS. Held every 2 years, the conference attracts about 5,000 delegates from all over the world to help examine, explore and inform the global response to HIV/AIDS.

[www.ias2011.org](http://www.ias2011.org)

### Cutting Edge

1–2 September, Christchurch

Cutting Edge is the national addiction treatment sector conference.

[www.cuttingedge2011.org.nz](http://www.cuttingedge2011.org.nz)

### Hosting a key event? Promote it online at

[www.drugfoundation.org.nz/events](http://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/events)



# Sponsoring and responsibility

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Sport and alcohol have long stood hand in hand. Across the country, sports clubrooms have been the social glue of many a community. Friendships have developed and deepened as Kiwis have won, lost and then drunk together.

**Keri Welham** explains as New Zealand's binge- drinking culture has grown ever more unsophisticated, the relationship between alcohol and sport has thrown up some uncomfortable truths.

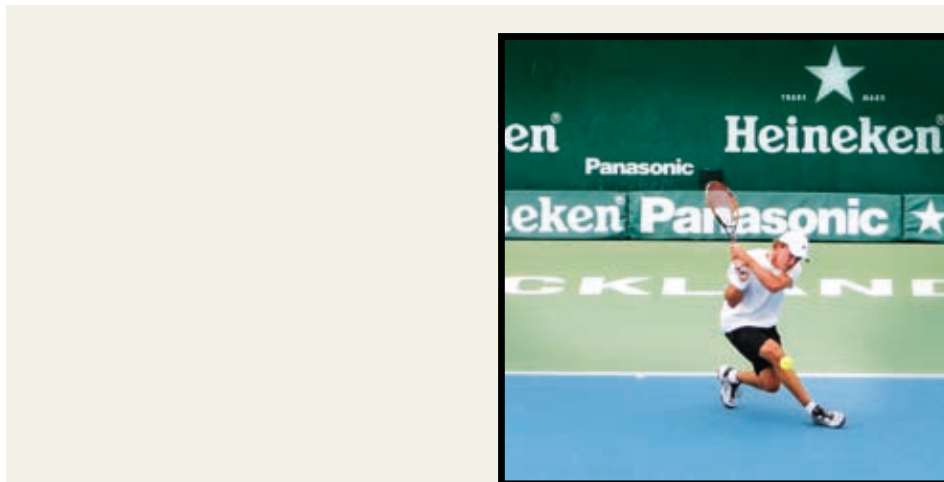
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**THERE'S A** fair bit of evidence suggesting alcohol sponsorship has encouraged hazardous drinking practices among both players and spectators in sport.

New Zealand Cricket Chief Executive Justin Vaughan drew attention to this when he spoke out about the behaviour of drunken New Zealand fans at a Bledisloe Cup match in Australia last year.

"That's not how sport should be. It should be pleasurable for everyone," he said.

He was also quick to point out the behaviour was not code-specific. Kiwi spectators have been known to turn ugly watching a variety of sports.

Vaughan's comments came as public outrage surfaced over drunken chaos at a Rugby League International at Eden Park where heavily intoxicated fans invaded the pitch, threw bottles onto the field and booed during the national anthems. With this year's Rugby World Cup looming, sports administrators are cringing at the potential for international embarrassment at the hands of hammered Kiwi fans.

Increasingly, the spotlight is falling on alcohol sponsorship in sport. What message does it send children when booze brands are emblazoned on the shirts of their sporting heroes? What does it do to a sporting community when the club must sell a sponsor's product to fundraise?

Prominent sports commentator Richard Boock addressed this issue

in the *Sunday Star-Times* in May 2010, saying the alcohol sponsorship ban was one of the best initiatives in the Law Commission's suite of recommendations.

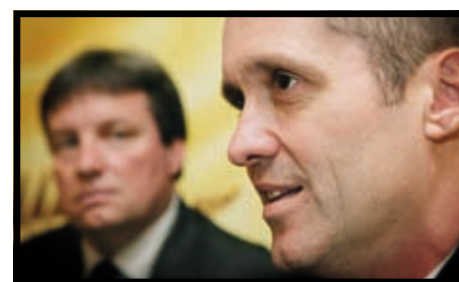
"It would at least put an end to one of the seediest aspects of our community; the use of sport to promote boozing to kids," he wrote.

Of course, this is not just an issue making headlines in New Zealand.

In 2009, for example, the British Medical Association called for a complete ban on alcohol advertising and sponsorship following the release of *Under the Influence*, a report showing the significant impact of alcohol marketing on harms associated with drinking.

“Increasingly, the spotlight is falling on alcohol sponsorship in sport. What message does it send children when booze brands are emblazoned on the shirts of their sporting heroes? What does it do to a sporting community when the club must sell a sponsor's product to fundraise?”

In fact, around 260 non-governmental organisations from 43 countries have endorsed a Global Resolution to End Alcohol Promotion in World Cup events. While this shows a widespread focus on



“That's not how sport should be.”

New Zealand Cricket Chief Executive Justin Vaughan



reducing the use of high-profile sports to promote alcohol products, the campaign does not cover the practice of providing sportspeople with free or discounted alcohol and/or financial assistance, which may even be a more direct and influential form of sponsorship.

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) estimates that total alcohol advertising and promotion (not just in sport) ranges from \$73 million to \$165 million per year. It says New Zealand has a problematic drinking culture but that it's unclear whether alcohol misuse is worse in sports than in wider New Zealand society.

According to the Law Commission report, by the early 1990s, more than half of all alcohol advertising expenditure was in forms of promotion other than broadcast advertising.

Kiwi researcher Dr Kerry O'Brien, now based at Melbourne's Monash University, has become a leading researcher on alcohol industry sponsorship and drinking in sports.

In one of the many journal articles he has co-authored with his Australian colleague Kypros Kypri, he writes, "Sport is not only being used by the alcohol industry to encourage drinking among sportspeople and fans, it is also the primary vehicle for alcohol-industry marketing to the general public. For example, reports from the US show that, for the first 6 months of 2009, Anheuser-Busch, one of the world's biggest alcohol

producers, spent more than US\$194 million or around 80 percent of its US TV advertising budget on sport. That is a staggering amount and indicates the centrality of sport as a marketing tool for alcohol sales."

“According to the Law Commission, by the early 1990s, more than half of all alcohol advertising expenditure was in forms of promotion other than broadcast advertising.”

Elsewhere, O'Brien and Kypri write, "Alcohol industry sponsorship of sportspeople, and in particular the provision of free or discounted alcoholic beverages, is associated with hazardous drinking. Sports administration bodies should consider the health and ethical risks of accepting alcohol industry sponsorship."

Research shows heavy binge drinking is particularly harmful and is more common among adults who play or watch sport, where it is also associated with other risky behaviours, such as drink-driving, unprotected sex and violence.

In a paper published in 2008, O'Brien and Kypri sought to understand whether direct alcohol sponsorship of sportspeople – through pubs, hotels,

breweries or liquor stores – was associated with the drinking behaviour of those athletes. The study involved 1,279 New Zealanders participating in 14 different team and individual sports. They ranged from grassroots to elite international level.

Of those surveyed, 47 percent received free or discounted alcohol as part of their sponsorship package. While 59 percent of those sponsored received only three free drinks or less, 10 percent received 16 or more units of free alcohol at each team session.

Of the sportspeople receiving alcohol industry sponsorship, 26 percent felt they should drink their sponsor's product and/or drink at their sponsor's premises.

When the alcohol industry sponsors a team or individual, it may do so by offering one or some of the following: free or discounted alcohol after matches or practice, payment of competition fees and travel costs, cash and provision of equipment and uniforms with the sponsor's name, logo or brand.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, sportspeople given free or discounted alcohol are shown to drink more than those given non-alcohol items as sponsorship, such as uniforms.

O'Brien and Kypri write, "The expectation conveyed is that sportspeople are obliged to look after their sponsor; to frequent the sponsor's pub and to drink the product after



“We act surprised when Black Cap Jesse Ryder or All Black Jimmy Cowan get into trouble when they’re out on the booze. The community vilifies them, rather than vilifying the alcohol companies who sponsor the games.”

Hon Jim Anderton

matches, practices and on other occasions. At the more social levels of sport, this typically means team mates, partners and friends will gather at the sponsor’s premises to drink and repay the sponsor’s ‘generosity’.”

“I think everyone would agree it would be completely unethical to require a group of non-smokers to smoke cigarettes every day for years on end in order to find out whether cigarettes really do harm you.”

Kiwi researcher Dr Kerry O’Brien

While O’Brien and Kypri’s 2008 research was compelling, the alcohol industry argued it did not produce robust evidence of causation. O’Brien says this is a similar tactic used by the tobacco industry during the ‘tobacco wars’ but now adapted for the alcohol debates.

“There it was claimed that, because randomised controlled trials (a proposed gold standard for evidence) were not conducted to test the impact of tobacco smoking on humans, you couldn’t infer it was actually smoking that was leading to the increased mortality and morbidity.

“But I think everyone would agree it would be completely unethical to

require a group of non-smokers to smoke cigarettes every day for years on end in order to find out whether cigarettes really do harm you.”

He says governments eventually moved to shut down tobacco sponsorship without the same level of proof the alcohol industry is now demanding.

In a 2009 editorial in *Addiction*, Kypri, O’Brien and colleague Peter Miller argue, “Where evidence is lacking, policy makers should adopt the precautionary principle that recommends taking preventive action in the face of uncertainty and shifting the burden of proof to the proponents of the activity. For alcohol, as for tobacco, sponsorship of sport enables companies to promote their products to vast audiences of all ages, with few if any substantial constraints and all the benefits of association with healthy activities and sporting heroes. It should not be left to the public to demonstrate that alcohol industry sponsorship is harmful but, rather, it should be up to the proponents of the activity, i.e. the alcohol industry, to show that the practice is harmless. In the meantime, government should prohibit the practice in the interest of reducing unhealthy alcohol use.”

It is almost a year since the Law Commission released a set of recommendations for liquor law reform (April 2010).





“If all it does is give them truckloads of beer, and then to get cash they have to promote everybody drinking lots of it, it’s not a good thing.”

New Zealand Rugby League  
Chief Executive Jim Doyle

The Law Commission’s report, *Alcohol in Our Lives: Curbing the Harm*, reflected on the content of the 2,939 submissions to its liquor licensing review. It said almost every submitter – 2,281 of them – had something to say about advertising and sponsorship, with 86 percent supporting banning or restricting all alcohol advertising in all media.

Alcohol advertising in New Zealand is self-regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority – an industry-based body. Brand advertising has been allowed since 1992.

As well as concern about overt advertising, such as that which promotes a particular brand, the Law Commission says there were also many submissions specifically concerning alcohol sponsorship.

One read, “There is presently an intimate association of alcohol with sporting activity just as there once was between tobacco and say, motor sport. It is not just direct advertising and brand promotion. It is a thread that runs through the media. Casual references, for example, to ‘tying one on’ are commonplace on radio sporting talkback; that getting plastered in connection with a sporting event holds fond memories.”

The Commission noted that marketing strategies, such as alcohol sports sponsorship, embedded images and messages about alcohol into young people’s everyday lives.

Researchers have noted it is the newer and more insidious forms of marketing that are likely to be most influential on adolescents – the internet, mobile phone messages, merchandising and social networking sites as well as sports and festival sponsorship such as the Heineken Tennis Open, surfing’s Export Gold Series and the Jim Beam Home Grown concert.

The Law Commission says the evidence linking drinking with advertising and sponsorship is compelling, particularly with regard to young people, but it does not support an alcohol advertising or sponsorship ban.

“Researchers have noted it is the newer and more insidious forms of marketing that are likely to be most influential on adolescents – the internet, mobile phone messages, merchandising and social networking sites...”

Kiwi researcher Dr Kerry O’Brien

“We believe the available evidence does not justify a recommendation for a total ban on alcohol advertising and sponsorship at this point. Unlike tobacco, it is possible to consume alcohol at low-risk levels... However, the contribution of alcohol to adverse health outcomes and to crime and the links

between advertising, sponsorship and consumption of alcohol must continue to be monitored.”

A controversial French alcohol policy law, *Loi Évin*, was passed in 1991. It attempts to restrict both the content of alcohol advertising, and the population’s exposure to that advertising.

The Law Commission summarised the impact of the *Loi Évin* as follows:

- All drinks over 1.2 percent alcohol by volume are considered alcoholic beverages.
- No advertising should be targeted at young people.
- No advertising is allowed on television or in cinemas.
- No alcohol sponsorship of cultural or sport events is permitted.
- Advertising is permitted only in the press for adults, on billboards, on radio channels (under precise conditions) and at special events or places such as wine fairs or wine museums.
- When advertising is permitted, its content is controlled. Messages and images may refer only to the qualities of products such as degree, origin, composition, means of production and patterns of consumption. Court decisions have led to no use of images of drinkers or depiction of a drinking atmosphere.
- A health message must be included on each advertisement to the effect that “alcohol abuse is dangerous for health”.

“On the one hand, [sports administrators] embrace and peddle alcohol via their sport, while on the other they punish individual sport stars and fans when they display loutish behaviour while intoxicated.”

Kiwi researcher Dr Kerry O'Brien



Despite widespread controversy, the Loi Évin has withstood robust legal challenges. The European Court has ruled that, “Such a ban constitutes a restriction on the freedom to provide services, but is justified by the aim of protecting the public.”

The Loi Évin’s opponents deplore the provision that forbids French broadcasters from showing alcohol brands on athletes’ clothing and sports stadium hoardings – prohibiting the broadcast of some foreign sporting events where these marketing techniques are used. However, the Law Commission said it received many submissions suggesting New Zealand model any liquor law reform on the Loi Évin.

Meanwhile, the British government last year banned promotions that encourage irresponsible drinking such as drinking games, speed drinking, women drink for free, all you can drink for £10 and the dispensing of alcohol directly into a person’s mouth. The Health Committee of the House of Commons has reported back on its inquiry into alcohol with a set of recommendations designed to restrict advertisers’ influence on children.

Recommendations included a 9pm watershed for television advertising, no posters or billboards within 100 metres of a school and no alcohol promotion on social networking sites.

O’Brien and Kypr’s research has met with particularly fierce resistance from

powerful alcohol industry lobby groups in the United Kingdom. O’Brien says sports administrators are sending mixed messages to participants and fans.

“On the one hand, they embrace and peddle alcohol via their sport, while on the other, they punish individual sport stars and fans when they display loutish behaviour while intoxicated.”

He says sports administrators have to take responsibility for the role they play in encouraging problematic alcohol consumption through their willingness to accept alcohol sponsorship dollars.

This is a view shared by Progressive Party leader Jim Anderton. In a speech in March 2010, Anderton said All Blacks games and summer cricket “drip in alcohol promotion”.

“But we act surprised when Black Cap Jesse Ryder or All Black Jimmy Cowan get into trouble when they’re out on the booze. The community vilifies them, rather than vilifying the alcohol companies who sponsor the games and encourage young New Zealanders to go out and drink to excess. That’s why I believe one of the most effective changes we could make is to reduce or ban alcohol advertising, particularly at sports games.”

In an opinion piece in *The Australian* last November, Brent Read wrote of Canberra Raiders star Joel Monaghan, who was under the influence of alcohol when he decided to engage in a sex act with a dog to play a prank on a



“You never say never. Our preference is never. We’ve been approached by a few and we’ve turned them down. We’ll certainly try and avoid [alcohol sponsors].”

New Zealand Rugby League  
Chief Executive Jim Doyle

team mate. The Raiders’ sponsors include Local Liquor, which *The Australian* reports has 250 outlets across Australia.

“In one breath, Canberra takes money from an organisation that makes millions out of selling alcohol. In another, it sanctions a player who committed a vile act while under the influence of that very product.”

New Zealand Rugby League Chief Executive Jim Doyle is determined to find alternatives to alcohol sponsorship but stops just short of saying he’d never sign a booze sponsor again.

“You never say never. Our preference is never. We’ve been approached by a few, and we’ve turned them down. We’ll certainly try and avoid [alcohol sponsors].”

He acknowledges this is easier at a national level, where other sponsors are in the wings. But many of the clubs are still stuck in arrangements with brewers who give them slabs of beer to sell as a fundraising mechanism in exchange for naming rights or other publicity.

“If all it does is give them truckloads of beer, and then to get cash, they have to promote everybody drinking lots of it, it’s not a good thing,” Doyle says.

Through an innovative incentive system, clubs currently reliant on the alcohol industry are being encouraged to look for alternative sponsors.

A paper prepared by SPARC late last year revealed 43 percent of sports clubs surveyed felt a ban on alcohol-related

sponsorship would have a large or very large impact on them. One small rural rugby and netball club said, “Quite honestly, we would not survive if our finance through either the bar or through sponsorship from alcohol was taken away from us.”

O’Brien says the alcohol industry uses sponsorship as a form of marketing and advertising and, in doing so, bypasses regulatory barriers that prohibit alcohol advertising on TV at certain times and during certain programmes when children are likely to be viewing.

“These alcohol marketing strategies need to be viewed in the same light as tobacco sponsorship, with regulation to match.”

O’Brien would like to see better funding streams for sports, particularly those that have been for so long in the shadow of industry sponsorship, such as cricket and rugby in New Zealand.

“Ring-fencing money from current alcohol taxation specifically for sport and other healthy physical activities or even increasing alcohol taxation slightly to fund sports would likely result in considerably more funding than is currently being provided by the government and alcohol industry combined. These funds could then be allocated without alcohol industry involvement or branding through an independent funding body to individual sports organisations, clubs, teams or individuals. Not only could this enable



more even distribution of funds and stability of funding, it would also eliminate the relationship between sports clubs and the alcohol industry.”

And there’s another consideration. Some co-sponsors may decide they don’t want to risk association with a sportsperson’s drunken indiscretions. O’Brien says the time may be coming when sponsors outside the alcohol industry choose to walk away rather than share the line-up with a booze brand and risk any potential alcohol-related public relations fall out. ■

# Sports stars on the booze



## Cricket



**NEW ZEALAND CRICKETING** sensation Jesse Ryder swore off alcohol for good early in 2009 after he cut his hand smashing a toilet window in Christchurch during a 2008 post-match drinking binge. He then missed a team meeting in Auckland and was subsequently unable to train following a drinking session in Wellington.

## Cycling



**COMMONWEALTH GAMES** cyclist Liz Williams complained after two team mates reportedly attempted to strip her and urinate on her in the Melbourne Games village in 2006. When asked how drunk she and her team mates Marc Ryan and Tim Gudsell were, Williams said she didn't know. Williams's mother, Patricia Williams, told NZPA at the time there was a huge amount of alcohol involved and "the whole culture needs to be changed so it's safe for the girls."



## Rugby league



**FORMER** Canberra Raiders league player Todd Carney had his \$400,000-a-season contract torn up in 2008 and was banned from his New South Wales home town, Goulburn, after a string of alcohol-fuelled indiscretions. Among the headlines were tales of him urinating on pub patrons and jumping on a car bonnet and smashing a shop window in Goulburn. He received a 12-month suspended sentence.

Carney was 'rescued' by Atherton Roosters President Mick Nasser, who gave him two jobs: one on the field for the small club earning \$40 a win; one behind the bar in Nasser's hotel earning \$20 an hour.

"I copped a lot of criticism for putting him in the pub, but it tends to jerk people into gear," Nasser told reporters. "They see how people react to alcohol."

Last year, a sober Carney was signed by the Sydney Roosters, made the Kangaroos and was named International Player of the Year.

## Rugby Union

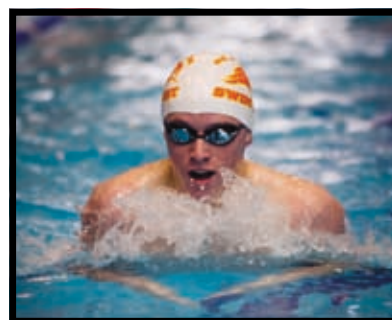


**THERE** have been a number of rugby union stars embroiled in alcohol-related scandals over the years, from former All Blacks captain Tana Umaga hitting team mate Chris Masoe over the head with a handbag in a Christchurch bar in 2006 to team mate Doug Howlett's 2007 arrest for criminal damage after cars were vandalised outside a London hotel.

In 2009 alone, Hurricanes rugby wing David Smith was convicted of drink-driving, Hurricanes player Dane Coles admitted abusing Police during a drunken scuffle, Auckland Blues player Taniela Moa was ordered to undergo alcohol counselling after a bottle was thrown at a female in a rugby club, as was Highlanders player Fetu'u Vainikolo after a similar incident where he threw a drink at a woman. Meanwhile, Toulouse player and former All Black Byron Kelleher was arrested and spent the night in a Police cell after being involved in a drunken brawl following a traffic accident.

Last year, All Black and Chiefs player Sione Lauaki pleaded guilty to his third assault charge in 4 years after what was reported as another 'late-night incident' in a bar. In 2008, current All Blacks halfback Jimmy Cowan faced a New Zealand Rugby Union misconduct hearing and underwent alcohol counselling after three arrests in 3 months for disorderly conduct.

## Swimming



**COMMONWEALTH GAMES** silver medallist Daniel Bell was sent home from India last year for breaking Swimming New Zealand's zero-tolerance alcohol protocol. Bell had "a couple of beers" after the swimming meet finished and was sent home immediately, NZPA reported at the time. It was the third time in the past 2 years Bell had been involved in an alcohol-related incident while overseas with a New Zealand team. Team mates Dean Kent, Corney Swanepoel and Cameron Gibson were expelled from the 2008 New Zealand Olympic team and the Beijing Olympic village after taking a photo of a drunk Bell sitting on the toilet at a social function, and in 2009, Bell was admitted to hospital in Rome suffering from excessive alcohol intake following the completion of the World Championships.

# Our culture of sporting excess

Kiwis admire their sporting men and women as heroes, and for years, this has also meant celebrating the robust ability of many of them to down the drink. But after several high-profile and embarrassing cases involving athletes and alcohol, many are beginning to question the place alcohol plays in our sporting culture. Could things be changing for the better? **Keri Welham**

**NEW ZEALAND RUGBY** League Chief Executive Jim Doyle is the first to acknowledge the downfalls of New Zealand sport's boozing culture, and says both players and fans are an "at-risk" community. But he says league is hoping to lead the way as a responsible, progressive sport committed to building both great players and great people with sound community-minded values.

Working with the tagline 'More than just a game', Doyle's team are refashioning their approach to building future stars. Camps for talented young players now feature a dual focus: improvement on the field and improvement off the field. Alcohol, Doyle says, has a negative impact on both.

New Zealand Cricket Chief Executive Justin Vaughan, a medical doctor, has seen a change in drinking culture since his days as an international cricketer in the 1990s.

"Our players play a lot more [and are] a lot more professional. It's no longer acceptable for guys to go out and get a skinful the night before [a match]."

He says sometimes sports stars, such as cricket's Jesse Ryder (see previous page), fall short of public expectations through events fuelled by alcohol. This, Vaughan says, reflects the rest of the community where such incidents also befall other young men.

"If all cricket players were viceless individuals, that just wouldn't connect with the community. Like it or not, they have a role model tag around them.

"I'd like to think Jesse will continue to improve, [but] there are no guarantees around that, absolutely not."

In a 2007 study of 1,214 Kiwi sportspeople aged 18 and over, lead-authored by New Zealander Kerry O'Brien, academics from three Australasian universities found hazardous drinking behaviours differed across levels of sporting participation. Elite provincial sportspeople were most inclined to drinking in a hazardous way, followed by club/social sportspeople, and elite international sportspeople displayed the lowest levels of hazardous drinking.

The report referenced a 1998 study that illustrated higher rates of binge





drinking among the leaders of sports teams than in sports team members themselves. In turn, sports team members were more likely to report binge drinking than non-athletes. The same 1998 research confirmed sportspeople experience significant pressure from team mates and coaches to drink together to increase team cohesion and bonding, while other research has suggested sportspeople use alcohol to cope with the stresses of competition and demands on their time and energy.

Another Australasian study led by O'Brien was released in 2008 and focused on identifying differences in the way male and female sportspeople drink. It found "coping motives" were a more significant predictor of hazardous drinking in females than males. Across both sexes, hazardous drinking among sportspeople at New Zealand universities was high, with 46.3 percent reporting binge drinking and 35 percent reporting frequent drinking.

There are abundant tales of high-profile sports stars breaking laws or moral codes, heaping embarrassment on their families and their sport. In 2007,

when Western Force players Scott Fava and Richard Brown were fined \$11,000 and \$5,000 respectively after being found guilty of animal abuse during a team bonding session, Force coach John Mitchell said, "They won't be the only boys or only team this year that has a problem with alcohol. It's generally in most clubs."

Mitchell himself was criticised for allowing a troublesome drinking culture to develop when he was All Blacks coach. Former hooker Anton Oliver, in a 2005 tell-all book, revealed the team's binge drinking culture "spiralled dangerously out of control" when 2003 coach Mitchell was at the helm.

"We had several young men in the team, and I thought, 'We are teaching them that this is what it is to be an All Black, to drink a lot of booze'."

Oliver said he began to address his discomfort with the drinking culture when he received a letter from one of his young fans who had been too afraid to approach the drunken rugby star in a restaurant because "of my profane language and generally poor behaviour".

Oliver writes that he burned with

**“If all cricket players were viceless individuals, that just wouldn't connect with the community. Like it or not, they have a role model tag around them.”**

New Zealand Rugby League Chief Executive  
Jim Doyle

“ We are teaching them that this is what it is to be an All Black, to drink a lot of booze.”

Former All Black Anton Oliver



shame when he read the letter and carried it around with him for 3 months.

Other research by O'Brien and colleagues in Australia found that young people think their friends probably drink significantly more than themselves and that sports stars probably drink significantly less. Overestimating the amount another person drinks has been shown to result in heavier drinking. Thus, in this study, young people illustrate that they may be more influenced by their perceptions of how much their friends drink.

The Australian Drug Foundation is attempting to sever the ties between sports clubs and a binge-drinking culture with its Good Sports programme, launched in 2000. The initiative offers three levels of accreditation to reflect how advanced a club is with its practices and policies involving alcohol. Clubs are assessed on factors such as how well their staff enforce liquor laws, provision of safe transport options and whether they have worked to establish funding streams other than grants from the alcohol industry. It is hoped the programme will show community sport

can survive without booze.

Clubs with accreditation have lowered their rates of risky drinking, violence and drink-driving. Contrary to the concerns of many sports clubs, which worry they will not survive without alcohol sponsorship, the head of the Good Sports programme, Carolyn Watts, says breaking the link between alcohol and sport increases revenue.

Watts told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that, if a club has a boozy culture, the rest of the community don't want to join in.

"Women don't want to come along to those clubs; they don't want to bring their children and have them surrounded by that sort of behaviour, and good players don't want to go to clubs that have a boozy culture because it shows they don't take their sport seriously."

Research shows that, once a sports club reaches level 2 accreditation in the Good Sports programme, club membership increases on average by 42 percent, and the number of women visiting the club grows by 24 percent.

Watts says changing a culture that

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**“We knew this was going to take time to implement, and we had to ensure we were seen to be encouraging and not dictatorial. Eventually we could see less presence of alcohol post-match.”**

Porirua's St George Rugby League Club  
Chair Taima Fagaloa

associates sporting celebrations with alcohol can be achieved by simple measures such as offering food, ensuring soft drinks and low-alcohol beer are available and abolishing all-you-can-drink nights and alcohol as prizes.

“The clubs that have problems generally have a boozy culture dominated by a certain group of men, and that culture just doesn't work any more.”

New Zealand Rugby League has launched a programme with a similar focus. Jim Doyle and his team are rolling out a nationwide club development programme where each of the 138

affiliate clubs will be assessed, ranked and given red, amber or green status. One of the criteria for reaching green accreditation, the most desirable status, will be banning alcohol on the sideline. As an incentive, green clubs will get gear such as tackle bags, cones and balls. Where many football grounds have goalpost bolsters emblazoned with alcohol brands, green clubs will be given bolsters to wrap around their goalposts that say ‘Ease up on the drink’. The bolsters are one initiative that has grown out of a 3-year agreement between NZRL and the Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC).

“For a culture change, it takes years,” Doyle says. “In some parts of the country [these] moves are more popular, in others, less popular.”

Porirua's St George Rugby League Club has already banned alcohol on the field and in the changing rooms at its home ground, Cannons Creek Park. St George has also stopped hosting rowdy after-match functions in its local bar following every game, choosing instead to host just a handful of select social events throughout the season.

Some individuals still go for an after-match drink, but the tradition of club-endorsed weekly drinking sessions has been broken. The club hasn't yet been assessed for green accreditation.

Chair Taima Fagaloa says the sideline alcohol ban was implemented from the start of the 2010 season, and at first, visiting teams were unsure of whether the club was serious.

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**“For a culture change, it takes years... In some parts of the country [these] moves are more popular, in others, less popular.”**

New Zealand Rugby League Chief Executive  
Jim Doyle

“We found we had to be consistent with the approaches and the messages,” Fagaloa says. “We knew this was going to take time to implement, and we had to ensure we were seen to be encouraging and not dictatorial. Eventually, we could see less presence of alcohol post-match.” ■



# The proposition

At the US mid-term elections last November, Californian voters rejected Proposition 19, a measure that would have allowed local bodies in the state to tax and regulate marijuana use. The losing margin was 8 percent or almost 700,000 votes, but, writes **Hamish McKenzie**, its supporters are not as disappointed as you might think.



“Prop 19’s being on the ballot elevated and legitimised the discourse about marijuana legalisation in ways that had been unimaginable just 2 years before.”

Drug Policy Alliance Executive Director Ethan Nadelmann

THE WAY Drug Policy Alliance Executive Director Ethan Nadelmann tells it, California’s recent marijuana legalisation initiative is perhaps the most successful proposition ever to fail.

“Personally, I was surprised that it got 46.3 percent of the vote,” he says. “I was prepared for it to get in the low 40s.”

Proposition 19 supporters had pinned their hopes – perhaps unrealistically, Nadelmann concedes – on a large turnout among young voters that would tip the scales in favour of legalisation. Analysis of exit polls suggests that, if young voters had turned out in the same numbers as they did for President Barack Obama’s election in 2008, the proposition would have garnered 49 percent of the vote – within the margin of error for victory.

But it wasn’t to be. Young Californians didn’t come in their droves, and a series of other setbacks in the face of a smart ‘No on Prop 19’ campaign consigned the initiative to failure. Opponents criticised the proposition as ill-defined and vague on crucial points, and the status quo prevailed.

As Nadelmann sees it, however, there were considerable upshots in the loss,

not the least of which were the educational aspects of the campaign, which will put similar initiatives in good stead for 2012. The simple existence of Proposition 19 on the ballot, he says, transformed the public dialogue around marijuana legalisation.

“Prop 19’s being on the ballot elevated and legitimised the discourse about marijuana legalisation in ways that had been unimaginable just 2 years before. In that sense, losing on election day was almost incidental to the greater accomplishment of Prop 19.”

Until October, it looked as if Proposition 19 might just score a surprise victory. Every poll from April until 2 October showed more voters were for than against it. On 30 September, a poll of 2,000 people by the Public Policy Institute of California showed 52 percent in favour versus 41 percent opposed. Two days later, however, an Ipsos poll of 450 people showed 53 percent opposed and just 44 percent in favour.

The proposition’s intent was simple. It would allow adults over the age of 21 to possess small quantities of marijuana for personal consumption at home or in



“It was so poorly written that people in California really didn’t know what they were being asked to vote for.”

Tim Rosales, No on Prop 19

a licensed establishment and grow it for personal use. Local governments would be able to tax marijuana sales, regulate marijuana businesses and impose heavy penalties on sales to minors.

Opponents argued legalisation would drastically reduce marijuana prices leading to increased consumption and that the proposition was so poorly worded that employers wouldn’t be able to fire staff who were stoned on the job and passengers would be able to smoke marijuana in a moving vehicle.

However, its supporters point out Proposition 19 would have had a significant impact on state coffers. If passed, it could have generated US\$1.4 billion a year in new tax revenue, according to the State Board of Equalisation, which administers California’s fuel, alcohol and tobacco taxes.

It would also have allowed Police and the courts to concentrate their resources on more serious crime. In 2008, there were more than 60,000 arrests for marijuana possession in the state, and a disproportionate number were of black people – despite the fact that blacks use marijuana at lower rates

than whites, according to a Drug Policy Alliance study.

Supporters also hoped the proposition would help address increasing violence on the US border with Mexico, which has continued to cause alarm in California. The drug trade-related violence in Mexico has claimed more than 28,000 lives in the last 4 years alone.

For these reasons, the proposition garnered some powerful supporters, including three sitting Congressmen, former Mexican President Vicente Fox, the California branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, the National Black Police Association, the National Latino Officers Association and several wealthy investors, including billionaire philanthropist George Soros.

On the other side of the ledger, however, were some formidable opponents, including then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the two major gubernatorial candidates, Meg Whitman and (now Governor) Jerry Brown, two Senators, the Californian Chamber of Commerce and several newspaper editorial boards, including the

## Quotes of Substance

“They will have entered the world of adult birdhood as nicotine addicts.”

Forest and Bird Field Officer **Albert Rebergen** comments after the discovery of a bird’s nest in Porirua – probably made by a thrush or a blackbird – that had been padded with unravelled cigarette butts.

“It does get tiring when you come into a big series like this and people focus on my negatives. It’s been like that all through my career, but I have brought it upon myself by the way I have behaved. That’s the past, I am trying to move on, become a better player and become a better person.”

Troubled Black Caps star **Jesse Ryder** says he has been off the booze “for 100 days” and believes his concentration levels and focus have increased.

“Like an increasing number of law enforcers, I have learned that most bad things about marijuana, especially the violence made inevitable by an obscenely profitable black market, are caused by the prohibition, not by the plant.”

Retired San Jose Police Chief **Joseph McNamara**, writing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

“Then we started drinking a lot more. Being drunk on stage, your inhibitions are gone. Most of the stuff we’ve come up with, like bringing someone up to sing with us or running around in drag, that’s all from being liquored up.”

Green Day lead singer **Billie Joe Armstrong** told Q magazine the band’s live performances have improved because they are usually drunk on stage.

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## Quotes of Substance

“Crack cocaine is more addictive than alcohol, but because alcohol is so widely used, there are hundreds of thousands of people who crave alcohol every day, and those people will go to extraordinary lengths to get it.”

**Professor David Nutt**, the former Chief Drugs Adviser to the British Government who was sacked in 2009, comments on a report he co-authored that ranked 20 drugs on 16 measures of harm to users and to wider society. Heroin, crack and crystal meth were deemed worst for individuals, with alcohol, heroin and crack cocaine worst for society, and alcohol worst overall.

“His contention is that alcohol is more lethal because it is so much more widely used. This is a bit like saying that driving is more dangerous than sky diving. It may be, but only because very many more people do it.”

**Stephen Glover**, writing in *The Mail Online*, accuses Professor Nutt of using selective methodology and describes his conclusion that alcohol should be a Class A drug as “barmy” because drinking “can be, and usually is, done in moderation and need not involve a powerful and irresistible addiction”.

“Joel now has to face his family as well as fans and supporters with that shame and has already undergone counselling to help him cope with the consequences of what has happened. It was a moment of abject stupidity brought about by too much drink and a complete lack of any thought process.”

Canberra Raiders star **Joel Monaghan** confirms through his manager that he is the player in question in a photograph that has been published on the internet featuring a sex act with a dog.

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*Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Perhaps most interestingly, the California Beer and Beverage Distributors and several medical marijuana growers also opposed the bill, likely fearful of the impact on their respective industries. There are various reasons why Proposition 19 failed, but the ‘No on Prop 19’ campaign honed in on one particular aspect: uncertainty over the wording of the proposition’s provisions.

“It was so poorly written that people in California really didn’t know what they were being asked to vote for,” says Tim Rosales, the ‘No on Prop 19’ campaign manager.

He said voters were uncertain about the way the legislation would be implemented by local counties rather than at the state level, and the proposition didn’t adequately define what would constitute impairment when it came to driving under the influence. There were also concerns about how employers could deal with workers under the influence of marijuana – a “huge grey area”, as Rosales puts it, which was played up by the California Chamber of Commerce.

“These factors combined were enough to turn off voters,” says Rosales. “They saw it as being very problematic and troublesome. A ‘no’ vote became a reflection of the fact that some people were not sure they really wanted to go that extra step.”

For Nadelmann, the reasons are more varied and complex – though he does concede that, as the vote neared, the focus shifted from the question of whether the drug should be legalised to the proposed legislation’s details (and the attendant misconceptions). This coincided with the proposition losing support in the polls in October.

There were other factors, however, that were just as compelling. When Governor Schwarzenegger signed a bill at the start of October that downgraded possession of an ounce or less of marijuana to an infraction – akin to a parking fine – rather than a misdemeanour, he simultaneously diluted one of the ‘Yes’ campaign’s main arguments: that marijuana arrests and convictions were needlessly punishing otherwise innocent people and wasting law enforcement resources. Many





“When Governor Schwarzenegger downgraded possession of an ounce or less of marijuana to an infraction, he simultaneously diluted one of the ‘Yes’ campaign’s main arguments.”

commentators believe Schwarzenegger wouldn’t have made that move had Proposition 19 not been on the ballot.

There was also an October announcement by US Attorney-General Eric Holder who said the Federal Government would continue to enforce marijuana laws even if the proposition passed. At the same time, there were rumours that a regulated and fully legal industry would come to be taken over by major corporate players, squeezing out the smaller growers who dominate the medical marijuana market today. Finally, Nadelmann says, there was just a sense of general nervousness about change that made it difficult for voters to make the leap. This is despite the fact that exit polls indicated 25 percent of voters who opposed Proposition 19 actually supported the idea of marijuana legalisation.

“People need to get comfortable with this idea,” says Nadelmann, “and in a way, Prop 19 got the conversation going. The more conversation you have, the more comfortable people become with it.”

Buoyed by the higher-than-expected levels of support for Proposition 19 and

polls that show higher-than-ever support for legalisation across the US (the latest Gallup poll says 46 percent of the country favours legalisation; that figure rises to 58 percent when only the Western states are considered), Nadelmann and the Drug Policy Alliance are looking to the Presidential elections in 2012 to revive the prospect of legalised marijuana.

Of course, Rosales and the ‘No’ campaign are doing their best to discourage such efforts. “We’ve just had this debate in 2010, and the arguments were pretty soundly rejected – and in a year when you saw a very high Democratic or liberal turnout amongst voters,” says Rosales, who also sounded a warning about the tough path Proposition 19 faces ahead.

“It’s a very, very difficult hill to climb, especially with these results. The ‘Yes’ campaign outspent the ‘No’ campaign by more than 10 to one, and they were still not successful in a very high Democratic turnout year.”

Nadelmann says it’s true the Democratic voter turnout was high, but says it was largely among demographics that aren’t particularly amenable to

marijuana legalisation – older Latinos, single women and black voters. Also, while the ‘Yes’ campaign did spend nearly US\$4 million in support of the proposition and the ‘No’ campaign only \$300,000–\$400,000, those figures are “peanuts” compared to spending on other propositions in California.

In the meantime, Nadelmann says Proposition 19 proponents have taken the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, and it is “highly likely” there will be a marijuana legalisation initiative back on the California ballot in 2012. It is also likely to surface in a number of other states, including Colorado, Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Nevada. With an expected increase in young voters for the Presidential election coupled with stronger commitments from key donors such as George Soros, Nadelmann has found cause for optimism.

It seems the one key message to arise from the partial success and ultimate failure of Proposition 19 is that Americans should get ready to do it all again in 2 years. ■

Hamish McKenzie is a writer based in the US.

# Should cannabis be on WADA's banned substances list?

Cannabis has been on the World Anti Doping Agency's (WADA's) list of banned substances since 2004.

## Why cannabis **should remain** on WADA's banned substances list

WADA'S ARGUMENTS for including cannabis as a banned substance are pretty straightforward. There are three conditions in the WADA Code upon which a substance could be banned: does it enhance performance, is it dangerous for the athlete, and is it against the spirit of sport? Cannabis violates at least two and probably all three of these conditions.

Firstly, cannabis contravenes the spirit of sport, which the Code describes as "a celebration of the human spirit, body and mind, characterised by values including health, respect for rules and laws, and respect for self and other participants".

Cannabis may be the most commonly used 'recreational drug' in society, but that does not change the fact that it is a mind-altering illegal substance. It is not a celebration of the mind to inflict upon it a chemical that changes the perception of reality. It is hard to see taking harmful substances as having respect for oneself, and taking an illegal substance shows very real disrespect for rules and laws.

Secondly, cannabis violates the Code in that its use represents a very real health risk to the athlete. While there may be debate about where cannabis sits in the drug harm index, there is no disputing the fact that it is harmful. It causes temporary – and perhaps even permanent – loss of brain function, wreaks havoc on the respiratory tract, and its smoke contains known carcinogens.

There are some who would argue that cannabis is also performance enhancing in that it calms the nerves before competition, and some athletes have said they use it to ensure they get enough sleep to compete well.

This is why only athletes testing positive during competition will be punished and not those who test positive at other times. In other words, WADA does allow some discretion and sticks to its mandate of policing athletes' drug use to improve their sporting performance, not its use in their social lives.

Cannabis and sport do not mix. Any drug that alters mind and/or body affects the nature of true and honest competition. The rules are based on sound reasons and are very, very clear. Athletes caught with cannabis in their system do not deserve to be competing and have only themselves to blame.

“Cannabis may be the most commonly used 'recreational drug' in society, but that does not change the fact that it is a mind-altering illegal substance.”

DESPITE RECEIVING pressure from various quarters to remove it, WADA's Executive Committee has approved a new version of the list for 2011, with cannabis still included.

In this edition of Viewpoints we provide the arguments for and against keeping cannabis a banned substance for sportspeople.



### You decide

Should cannabis be on WADA's banned substances list?

Vote online

[www.drugfoundation.org.nz/viewpoints](http://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/viewpoints)

“No one wants athletes taking performance enhancing drugs, but there is no scientific evidence at all suggesting cannabis is performance enhancing.”

### Why cannabis **should be removed** from WADA's banned substances list

THE BIG mistake WADA makes is that it treats all illicit substances as if they were the same. The fact is that they are not.

No one wants athletes taking performance enhancing drugs, but there is no scientific evidence at all suggesting cannabis is performance enhancing. It doesn't make you run faster or jump higher. It doesn't increase your fitness, and it certainly doesn't enhance your ability to concentrate.

It would be a far better use of WADA's time if it focused on catching athletes taking steroids or drugs that artificially enhance their strength or give them an abnormal ability to cope with pain. In other words, worrying about cannabis use takes valuable resources away from catching the real drug cheats.

Because cannabis has no positive effect upon an athlete's performance and is used recreationally off the field, it can't be argued its use is contrary to the spirit of sport. There's no reason at all to believe someone who smoked a joint at a party a few days before a competition is any less enthusiastic about celebrating the human spirit, body and mind than any other athlete.

Nor is using cannabis a sure sign of disrespect for rules and laws of sport, which is all WADA should be concerned about. It has no business prying into the private lives of athletes so it can pontificate on whatever minor legal infractions they might commit in their own time. And in some countries, cannabis use is legal, putting it on virtually the same level as tobacco and alcohol, which are not on the banned substances list.

However, the most compelling reason for removing cannabis from the list is the disproportionate impact a conviction can have on those who are caught.

In late 2010, for example, a Gold Coast rugby league player who returned his third positive test for cannabis was banned for life from associating with the sport in any way. Not only can he never play again, he must also never train others, coach, manage or act in any support role – not even for teams on which his children might play.

This man knew the risks and has himself to blame for his own foolishness, but a lifetime ban is hardly a fitting punishment for taking a non-performance enhancing drug. And while such a ban may well be a deterrent for others, cutting off someone with a drug problem from sport, which can have remarkable protective factors against drug misuse, seems particularly brutal and tragic.

In 2007, Drug Free Sport New Zealand, the government-funded organisation that carries out testing of athletes, lobbied WADA for change, arguing, “The mechanism developed to address performance enhancing drugs is not the right one to address the social drug issue.”

They are quite right. Unlike steroid abusers, cannabis-using athletes are not drug cheats. At worst, they are merely cheating themselves, and that is punishment enough. ■



# Two Drinks Max

In late 2010, most New Zealanders were bemused by the government's failure to reduce the blood alcohol content limit from 0.08 to 0.05, opting instead for a further 2 years research. This was despite recommendations from the Law Commission and a raft of experts in the wider health and justice sectors. Unexpected support for lowering the limit came by means of the *Herald on Sunday's* successful Two Drinks Max campaign. Editor **Bryce Johns** writes about the rationale behind the campaign.

Bryce  
Johns



IT'S AN unusual sight to see a Sunday newspaper editor banging on like some crusading do-gooder. But you may be about to see more of this sort of behaviour.

The *Herald on Sunday* last year took a strong stand on the nation's drink-driving laws, drawing nearly 10,000 people to sign up to a campaign to make the country's roads safer.

## “As big a question as why Two Drinks Max is why a campaign at all?”

Two Drinks Max had two goals; to get people to pledge not to drive on our roads after they had consumed more than two standard drinks and to pressure the government to lower the drink-driving limit.

So why Two Drinks Max? Experts say this is the level that would see most people come under a blood alcohol level of 50mg per 100ml of blood. The current level is 80mg per 100ml, but Police and a variety of health sector people want it reduced to 50mg. Even if the government

sticks to its line of needing 2 more years of research before making a decision, it is almost certain 50mg will be the next legal limit and Two Drinks Max will still apply.

As big a question as why Two Drinks Max is why a campaign at all?

Because the days of newspapers simply being records of fact are gone. News can be accessed in a multitude of ways, and newsprint is only surviving because of the authoritative edge it supplies in analysing facts, offering opinion and understanding the public mood.

The *Herald on Sunday* is a relatively new paper, only 7 years old. It has a reputation of being aggressive and appealing to the more populist market. But as its sales, readership and credibility have risen, so have its goals. I want it to have a soul.

That means having a leading role in the community and championing issues that have clear public backing. Two Drinks Max, or at least reducing the alcohol drink-driving limits, clearly does.

The paper polled its readers, spending thousands to do so, and more than 70



percent backed a law change. It mirrored other polls conducted by interest groups, and that gave newsroom managers reassurance there was a public will.

So we got it under way. Knowing the chances of forcing the government's hand on this are limited, as much because of the pressure it is under from the hospitality sector, it was important getting a law change was not the only goal. Getting readers to pledge to drive with a lower alcohol limit means people who care can already do something to make the country safer without having to be told by the government.

And it is extremely nice to hear some positive comments about the paper around the traps. Readers seemed surprised we took this initiative. They shouldn't be. We are striving more than ever to make sure the issues we target are issues they care about.

But a heightened sense of loyalty towards the paper is only a side benefit.

This is really something that can change, or at least save, lives. Ideally, we'd like the government to see sense and do what the people that voted it in want... reduce the drink-driving limits.

But we know we've already won. Thousands have signed on, and the information that has gone out has no doubt made more people more aware of the dangers on the roads when people drink and drive.

The campaign has rolled on into the new year. As each person dies who could have been saved by a lower limit, we'll remind the government. We'll batter away until the law is changed.

And we're already planning what's next on our readers' agenda. Recently, senior reporter Leigh van der Stoep joined the paper, with part of her brief as a project manager for campaigns.

With 400,000 people reading us each week, that's a lot of people who have hopes, dreams and fears. If we can better understand how we can help them achieve goals or put right injustices, we're better serving them.

The paper always needs to remain objective, accurate and balanced. But you can do that and make things happen. Watch out for the *Herald on Sunday*. ■

Join the Two Drinks Max Facebook group at [www.facebook.com/twodrinksmax](http://www.facebook.com/twodrinksmax)

“ Getting readers to pledge to drive with a lower alcohol limit means people who care can already do something to make the country safer without having to be told by the government. ”

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# Hello Sunday morning

By Rob Zorn

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👉👉 Early dawning, Sunday morning, it's just the wasted years so close behind. 🍷🍷

*Sunday Morning, The Velvet Underground, 1966*

**TWENTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD** Chris Raine says he's really no different to any other young Aussie bloke his age. He likes the ladies, loves a laugh and certainly enjoys a drink or two. While he says he's always been pretty ambitious and motivated, he doesn't think that makes him all that unique.

Chris is the driving force behind Hello Sunday Morning, a community of bloggers who challenge themselves to go without alcohol for a set time (3 months, 6 months, a year) and share their experiences online.

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👉👉 It's actually about living more; living the best quality life you can. You can't be living life to the fullest and achieving your personal bests when you're getting pissed every weekend. 🍷🍷

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It all started with a hangover-inspired epiphany late in 2008. Feeling "bloody awful yet again" on a Sunday morning, Chris began thinking about how much more he could be achieving if he wasn't drinking so heavily and so regularly.

He'd also been reading how Australia's binge-drinking culture cost the country over AUS\$15 billion and was responsible for the death of more than 260 young Australians each year. But he felt the government's fear-based advertising campaigns designed to warn young Australians off the drink weren't

getting through and just didn't seem relevant.

In what seemed to many like a rash act of madness, Chris decided to give up the booze for an entire year and spend that time seeking an understanding of why binge drinking is so entrenched and what it would take for a young Australian to become genuinely non-reliant on alcohol – emotionally, socially and psychologically.

He had his last drink for the year at 4am on 1 January 2010.

That it seemed like madness is indicative of a culture where alcohol is so thoroughly normalised. His friends said they didn't believe he could do it, and one suspects that was the last straw of motivation he needed.

Chris began blogging his experiences at Hello Sunday Morning as a way of remaining publicly accountable. At first, it was all about himself, but a few months in, he began encouraging others to join him, and the blog has slowly grown in participants. At the time of writing, 160 people have either completed or are currently doing a "Hello Sunday Morning." Most participants are Australians, but several blog from overseas, including at least one New Zealander.

One thing he wants people to understand from the outset is that Hello Sunday Morning is not primarily about drinking less.

"It's actually about living more; living the best quality life you can. You can't be living life to the fullest and





“Being able to transcend all those cultural triggers around alcohol is actually pretty amazing; very empowering.”

Chris Raine

achieving your personal bests when you're getting pissed every weekend, but for me the focus should be on what's being gained, not on what's being lost.”

For Chris, that meant rearranging things in his life so that he could embrace the challenge to do everything a young, single bloke would want to do, but all without the booze.

“I wanted to be able to go nuts on the dance floor, laugh myself stupid with my mates, go out and pick up – all the things I would normally have only done after a fair bit of drinking,” he says.

“People who don't need alcohol to relax and be themselves are the people I admire most. I'm inspired by people who rely on their own faculties, who challenge themselves, and I wanted to become more like that.”

He says others join to set and achieve very different goals, and that's fine with him. The aim is for everyone who does the programme to achieve positive transformations in their lives and, by regularly blogging about those changes, influence those around them. He's a firm believer in the power of storytelling and the importance of social media.

But he warns that, while a lot of people do Hello Sunday Morning because they don't like how much they're drinking, it's not a substitute for treatment.

“It's not something that will cure you if you have a serious alcohol problem. We're not a church group or Alcoholics Anonymous with a 12-step programme. Hello Sunday Morning is a tool for

people who want to challenge the priority alcohol has come to hold in their lives.

“Our culture forces us into drinking situations. Our identities become entwined with drinking. Hello Sunday Morning gives us a break to get a perspective on that and the courage to believe it doesn't have to be that way.”

So what was it like going a year without alcohol?

“To tell the truth,” he says, “It was a bit like stepping out into a wilderness of unfamiliar territory. The first 3 months were filled with ups and downs. At times, it felt like a large part of my life was missing and it was hard, but then it began to plateau. After 6 months, it became quite normal, and by the end, it just wasn't a big deal at all.”

In fact, as the end of the 12 months approached, Chris felt a sense of apprehension about stepping out of the alcohol-free architecture he had created for himself, but the transition went pretty smoothly.

“The first night I could drink again, I didn't feel all that good about where I was so I decided I wouldn't drink. It was easy. It wasn't a battle and it was great to be able to make that decision. The second night I had a couple of drinks and thought I could take or leave the woozy way it made me feel.”

Chris now enjoys alcohol but keeps tabs on himself and stops as soon as he begins to first feel its effects.

“Too much alcohol and you lose motivation and productivity, which is

a real downer. I've got places to go and things to do that are so much more important.

“Being alcohol-free for an entire year was enough to give me a real sense of objectivity I can continually return to. I know that life can be better than great without drinking, and being able to transcend all those cultural triggers around alcohol is actually pretty amazing; very empowering.”

He's looking forward to doing a second Hello Sunday Morning just because he enjoys the intensity and focus it brings.

The hope is that Hello Sunday Morning will catch on and eventually go quite global. Most people have 150 others in their social circle whom they could influence, the website says, either to do the programme or to just positively influence the drinking attitudes and behaviours of those around them.

So if you can set aside 3 months this year, why not consider giving Hello Sunday Morning a go? It doesn't just have to be about alcohol. We could all do with some extra focus and positive goal setting.

As one Hello Sunday Morning participant said, it all comes down to self-belief and confidence – and explaining this is why you're not currently drinking can work as an “excellent pick-up line.” ■

Find out more and register at [www.hellosundaymorning.com.au](http://www.hellosundaymorning.com.au)

# Drugs and development – joining the dots

At global bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and across member states, drug policy and development policy have traditionally been viewed as separate discourses. Practitioners in each field have rarely sought to identify how drug and development issues intersect. However, this is starting to change as the linkages between drugs and development become impossible to ignore.



“We must recognise the major impediment to development posed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking.”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

IN THE lead-up to the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Summit in September 2010, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared, “We must recognise the major impediment to development posed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking.”

And in October 2010, *The Lancet* featured a report on how drug crime and criminalisation threaten progress on MDGs.

Despite growing recognition of the impact of illicit drugs on development, the mainstream development community has paid inadequate attention to these issues. Tellingly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is not even a ‘UN partner’ on the MDGs.

Likewise, those working on illicit drugs issues often don’t consider the broader social and economic contexts in which drug production, trafficking and use occur. Illicit drug production is mainly concentrated in developing countries and undertaken by the poorest and most vulnerable population groups. They inhabit hostile environments and are often subject to inequitable land tenure and credit arrangements.

The actual income earned by the majority of opium poppy and coca-producing households bears little resemblance to the final market price. It is estimated that farmers earn only 1 percent of the overall global illicit drug income while most of the remaining revenue is earned by traffickers in developed, rather than developing, countries.

Underlying tensions between the objectives and strategies implemented in the name of drug control and those of the development community have not helped advance collaboration between these sectors. For decades, global drug policy, influenced by the UN Conventions, has relied on a prohibitionist approach that has focused mainly on curbing supply. But this ‘war on drugs’ approach has had significant adverse impacts on health, socio-economic development, human rights and the environment.

Likewise, traditional development orthodoxy has often focused on achieving macroeconomic growth at the expense of considerations about equity and social inclusion. The rapid social

Women cultivating poppy plants  
near Bhopal, India.



changes that have accompanied the dramatic economic growth across parts of south-east Asia have contributed to the increased use of illicit drugs. As always, it is the most vulnerable and marginalised groups that bear the brunt of drug-related harms.

There are many ways by which the use of illicit drugs, along with efforts to control their production and distribution, can impact on development. Drug use contributes to diminished health, leading to higher healthcare costs and decreased earnings at a population level. This is most obvious in the area of HIV/AIDS where the sharing of needles among people who inject drugs spreads HIV.

Involvement in the illicit drugs market, often a result of poverty, also diverts people and resources from legitimate economic activities and can have serious consequences for long-term human development. Huge profits associated with the drug market foster organised crime and corruption, which in turn undermines good governance. This is abundantly clear across the globe from Mexico to Afghanistan.

The cultivation and refinement of naturally derived drugs can also have adverse ecological effects, while crop eradication is a major cause of deforestation and may deprive some of the poorest people on the planet of their chief livelihoods. The high cost of drug law enforcement is another negative impact from a development perspective, diverting limited resources from other priority areas.

It is clear that drug use and markets and the strategies that are employed to tackle them are closely linked with both development and underdevelopment. It is also undeniable that, regardless of the overall level of economic development in a country, drugs have a much greater negative impact on the poorest and most vulnerable segments in society.

To attain sustainable, positive and lasting results, there needs to be a recognition that drug control and development efforts must go hand in hand. Approaches to reduce drug production and use need to include measures to improve social and economic opportunities. In addition, strategies aimed to develop human





Coca farmers have lunch during their fifth day of protests in Taraza, northern Colombia, 2008. Thousands of farmers who plant coca, the raw material for cocaine, protested against a government programme of manual eradication of illegal crops. (AP Photo/Luis Benavides)

“It is also undeniable that, regardless of the overall level of economic development in a country, drugs have a much greater negative impact on the poorest and most vulnerable segments in society.”

capital, advance social inclusion, improve public health, foster good governance, promote sustainable economic growth and alleviate poverty need to include – in a synergetic, complementary and carefully planned manner – actions that address the production, trafficking and use of illicit drugs.

It is imperative that the development movement take steps to analyse these linkages, engage in these debates and promote ‘joined up’ policies and programmes that effectively tackle the marginalisation and stigmatisation of already disadvantaged communities that are most affected by drug markets and use. In particular, UNDP, as the lead UN agency on development issues, should commence working on this area by strengthening cooperation with UNODC in order to develop a shared understanding of existing challenges and provide shared leadership on promoting effective responses.

The MDGs originated as a pledge made by world leaders at a UN Summit in 2000. They agreed to “free our fellow

men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty by 2015”.

Specifically, 189 heads of state and their representatives committed to the following goals: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women; registering a significant reduction in infant and maternal mortality; gaining control of infectious disease such as HIV/AIDS and malaria; protecting environmental quality; and developing a global partnership of rich and poor nations for sustainable development.

With less than 4 years to go, the universal attainment of the MDGs is looking increasingly elusive. While some countries have made considerable progress towards some goals, other countries are lagging far behind.

To maximise progress, development policy makers and practitioners must broaden their horizons and ensure the strategies they promote take into account drug issues and do not unwittingly



Soldiers from the Thai military chop poppies in Chiang Mai province, northern Thailand. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

create the very conditions that lead to an increase in drug use and harms.

And those working on drug issues should consider the wider social and economic forces that drive drug production, trafficking and consumption. In this regard, efforts to view illicit drug use through a health and social policy lens and the shift towards more balanced drug policies in many countries are welcome steps that should help bridge the gap between the development and drug policy sectors.

But there is still a long way to go to find an integrated approach to drug control that maximises the protection of health and human rights and the promotion of equitable social and economic development. ■

This article is based on a paper by Martina Melis and Marie Nougier that was written for the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) and examines how global action against illicit drugs impacts on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Read the full briefing paper at [www.idpc.net](http://www.idpc.net)



Haribab, left, and Ram Pagal inject one another with the same needle at Kashmiri Gate in New Delhi, India. India has the largest number of HIV positive people in the world, with approximately 2.5 million. (AP Photo/John Mathew)

## Quotes of Substance

“My condolences to the supporters of California’s Prop 19. If only you had a way to soothe your sorrows.”

Tweet from **Stephen Colbert**, host of Comedy Central’s *The Colbert Report*, after the failure of Proposition 19 in California during last year’s mid-term elections. The measure would have allowed local bodies in the state to tax and regulate marijuana use.

“If all it does is give them truckloads of beer and then to get cash they have to promote everybody drinking lots of it, it’s not a good thing.”

New Zealand Rugby League Chief Executive **Jim Doyle** says clubs sponsored by alcohol companies “are being encouraged to look elsewhere”. He also says league’s days of benefiting from alcohol sponsorships are numbered. He has vowed the national team, previously known as the Lion Red Kiwis, won’t use alcohol sponsors.

“The effect of alcohol on car crashes and any trauma is just so underestimated by people who have an ability to make a change – and I’m talking specifically about people in government.”

**Peter Freeman**, Clinical Director of Wellington Hospital’s Emergency Department, says his colleagues around the country are horrified at the waste of life from alcohol-related car crashes.

“We’re going to buy the biggest round in Australian history.”

VB’s **Craig Maclean** is urging all Aussies to get behind their team as they fight to reclaim the Ashes. The Australian cricket team sponsor pledged to buy a beer for every adult in the country if the home side beat England to take the Ashes series.



# The debate down at Goodbye Blue Monday

New Zealand's drinking culture needs to change. The government is currently seeking submissions from the public on its Alcohol Reform Bill, and many in communities are mobilising to do just that. Christchurch CAYAD Co-ordinator **Mike Moss** writes about a local debate he helped organise to get his community informed and vocal.

Mike Moss



**THERE** have been workshops and presentations all across the country to discuss and prepare those concerned to make Alcohol Reform Bill submissions, but we wanted to do something a little different. We wanted to bring the discussions to the bars themselves.

When you read *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*, all the interesting meetings are held down at the local inn. Former Mayor Garry Moore and his family run a bar in Christchurch named Goodbye Blue Monday, and we thought such a bar was an ironic but perfect place to hold a debate on alcohol law reform.

“When you read *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*, all the interesting meetings are held down at the local inn.”

The idea was to thrash out from numerous perspectives the various proposals in the government's bill. Labour MP Lianne Dalziel and I argued that alcohol is an everyday item that should be readily available for anyone over 18. It was fun to laugh a bit about the subject and to make the case against

alcohol law reform. We argued that over 80 percent of New Zealanders drink, so alcohol should be treated like any other food or drink product and should continue to be available at supermarkets and corner stores at affordable prices.

On the other side, Alistair Humphrey from the Canterbury District Health Board and Police Sergeant Al Lawn from

“For the three days a week between Thursday and Saturday, alcohol takes away our Police force.”

the Alcohol Strategy and Enforcement Team argued in favour of the recommendations made by the Law Commission's review that preceded the government bill. Their main point was that alcohol is no ordinary commodity.

Alistair spoke on the medical issues arising from our current drinking culture. He was also able to highlight just how dangerous binge drinking is and the impact it has medically. He said that, between Thursday and Saturday every week, over 75 percent of cases presented to hospital emergency departments throughout the country



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were alcohol related. It was also startling to hear that 25 percent of the population drink over 45 percent of the nation's alcohol.

Al Lawn drew on his Police experience to make some compelling points about alcohol's effect on crime. He said that for the 3 days a week between Thursday and Saturday, alcohol takes away our Police force. If you make an urgent call to the Police on these days, chances are they'll be too busy to come because there's been another drink-driving accident or some booze-fuelled domestic violence they have to attend first. He also explained the effect alcohol has on mental health and suicide, and said he was sick of turning up to incidents where someone has become intoxicated and done something as irreversible as killing themselves.

At one stage, the debate was interrupted by a rather intoxicated gentleman who yelled out to us that people will drink for pleasure and there's no way around that fact. This was the perfect opportunity to drive our point home that alcohol should be for pleasure, but should not be used to get absolutely hammered 3 nights a week!

After the debate, there was a time for

audience participation and questions, which proved very beneficial. An interesting perspective came from a DJ who played music in bars. One of the Law Commission's original recommendations was to force bars to close earlier, but this person argued this would have an unfair impact on DJs who rely on being paid to play their music into the wee hours of the morning. This was an interesting perspective I hadn't thought of. However, I would imagine that if bars closed earlier, they'd probably get the DJs in earlier too, so I'm not so sure they'd end up with less work.

One noticeable omission on the night was the absence of anyone actually from the alcohol industry. Gary had invited a number of people from the industry and from different brewing companies, but most didn't even return his calls. It's a shame they missed this opportunity to have their point of view heard.

The purpose of the debate was to generate discussions within the community, so it was great to see everyone staying behind afterwards to continue talking.

Over all, the debate was a success, so much so that we are organising another

one in early 2011 at the same place. This time, we are hoping to get a representative from the hospitality industry to join us.

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**“ One noticeable omission on the night was the absence of anyone actually from the alcohol industry. ”**

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When you look at the way alcohol is marketed and sold in New Zealand, it is no wonder our drinking culture is so bad. Alcohol law reform is needed, and those who will have the most effect on strengthening the Alcohol Reform Bill are people from communities who can speak up about the harms and the hurt they are experiencing. In this sense, individuals and communities are vital, and debates like the one we held can really play a part in giving communities a shared understanding and united voice. ■

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**Mike Moss has a background in social work and has been working in the Otautahi CAYAD (Community Action on Youth and Drugs) team in Christchurch for the last 3 years.**

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## Alcohol ban call as park erupts



**CHRISTCHURCH** Police and Mayor Bob Parker said they would support an alcohol ban at all public events at Christchurch's Hagley Park after a drunken night of chaos at Christmas in the Park.

Christchurch Central Area Commander Inspector Derek Erasmus said Police arrested 10 people during the show. However, he said they could have made "a lot more" arrests if more officers were available.

A 15-year-old boy was stabbed repeatedly in the face and body on a riverbank near the concert. In another attack, a Police officer was assaulted as he tried to break up a fight between two youths.

## Police want booze outlet numbers slashed

**POLICE** believe the number of liquor outlets in an area should be limited after a study found nearby residents were more susceptible to alcohol problems.

The University of Otago study, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, found a "clear association" between the number of alcohol outlets and the alcohol-related harm reported by people living within 1 kilometre of the sites.

A growth in liquor outlets in the past 20 years, coupled with their concentration in poorer areas, "constitutes a

threat to public health", the study said.

Study leader Professor Jennie Connor said the probability of people binge drinking increased 4 percent for every off-licence within a kilometre of their home.

Each club within a kilometre radius increased the amount of drinking-related harm by nearly 6 percent. Each off-licence increased reported harm by more than 2 percent.

Christchurch Police Alcohol Strategy and Enforcement Team Leader Sergeant Al Lawn said the study confirmed what Police had observed for a long time.

"The more licences you have, the more competition and the cheaper the price, the more availability and the more convenience," he said.

Nationally, the study found licensed premises had increased from 6,295 in 1990 to 14,183 in 2010.

## Bar 'failed to supervise' killer driver



**A BAR** that served 13 drinks to a man before he killed a cyclist in a hit-and-run crash failed to adequately supervise his drinking or stop him getting behind the wheel. The owner of the bar in Canterbury was even drinking with driver before the driver staggered out of the premises.

But in spite of having "failed badly", The Rock Restaurant and Bar in Rolleston could not be held directly responsible for the

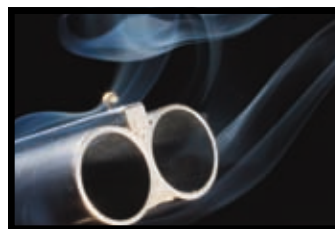
cyclist's death, the Liquor Licensing Authority has determined.

The Authority ordered a suspension of the bar's licence for three days because of its failures that day.

The driver was controversially sentenced to 12 months' home detention after pleading guilty to driving under the influence of alcohol causing death and failing to stop for an injury accident.

The Liquor Licensing Authority's decision found there was no one qualified with a general manager's certificate working at the bar while the driver was drinking there.

## Tobacco crime argument dismissed



**AFTER** a year-long inquiry into the tobacco industry in New Zealand and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori, the Māori Affairs Select Committee has released a report recommending strict measures aimed at halving smoking by 2015 and turning New Zealand into a smokefree nation by 2025.

It wants the government to reduce the amount of tobacco imported, force tobacco products to be sold in plain packaging, extend smokefree areas to vehicles, ban vending machines, make tobacco companies fund smoking cessation products and ban tobacco displays in shops.

The report has plenty of

support from health sector representatives, opposition MPs and the Māori Party, but a response from Cabinet is likely to be tempered.

Besides tobacco companies, one of the report's main opponents is the Association of Community Retailers (ACR), which argues that enforced changes to displays will be costly, and price spikes and limited supply will lead to more robberies and organised crime feeding a black market.

A spokesman from Police National Headquarters in Wellington said not enough statistics had been compiled since cigarette prices went up 10 percent in May 2010 to suggest whether there had been a spike in tobacco-related robberies.

The ACR's tobacco spokesman, Richard Green, said his own experience and publicity about tobacco thefts over the past few months, pointed to an obvious increase in tobacco-related crime since the price rise. In terms of cost to retailers, having to redesign shop displays would hit retailers in the pocket, as would the drop in takings.

Mr Green said while his stance was about protecting small businesses financially and in terms of safety, there were also concerns about an erosion of rights.

"I want freedom of choice. I want our fundamental human rights given back to us in New Zealand."

Māori Affairs Select Committee Chairman Tau Henare said there is no evidence of a spike in tobacco-related crime due to price increases.

"You might as well say

it's because of the alignment of Mars and Jupiter," he said.

"All they are worried about is their bottom line, quite frankly, and if they are worried about their bottom line because of tobacco sales, then as far as I'm concerned, they are just tobacconists, they are not dairies or retailers."

There has been speculation about links between the ACR and the tobacco industry.

Mr Green said he had undertaken public relations on behalf of retailers with some logistical assistance, including the use of office space from Glenn Inwood, a PR man who has represented Imperial Tobacco, but said he had not received any funding assistance.

"I don't have any communication with tobacco companies whatsoever," he said.

## Alcoholics told to keep drinking



**DOCTORS** are telling severe alcoholics needing help to keep drinking because there is a shortage of acute detoxification beds in the South Island, specialists say.

A Canterbury doctor said he had dealt with several patients who wanted to stop drinking but could not do so safely unless in a hospital or a detox unit.

Heavy drinkers could suffer from seizures and delirium while detoxing, so if no beds were available,

he would tell them to keep drinking.

"If the person is suicidal or severely depressed or has other medical problems like a gastric ulcer that requires them to stop drinking, you are in a real bind," he said.

National Addiction Centre director Professor Doug Sellman said there were problems across the country for people needing medical detoxification beds.

He said there were about 120,000 people with an alcohol-addiction problem in New Zealand, and about 10 percent of them would need medical detox to stop drinking.

"If you can't get a place and can't get medical attention and suffer convulsions, it's best to keep drinking," he said.

Sellman said there was probably more detoxing in Police cells than at medical detox units because New Zealand treated alcoholism and drug addiction as a justice issue rather than a health issue.

## Constipated truckie relieved by cannabis

**A TRUCK** driver caught smoking cannabis behind the wheel of a 40-tonne dangerous goods truck says he took the drug to ease constipation.

Lawrence Jury was picked up by Police in Blenheim after other motorists allegedly saw him using a bong while driving the rig down State Highway 1 in October last year.

He was found to have cannabis in his blood and admitted charges of possessing cannabis, utensils to smoke cannabis and driving under the influence of drugs.

But he denies smoking while driving, saying he had a few 'cones' from his Powerade bottle bong while waiting for goods to be loaded on his articulated truck at Picton.

"My opinion on smoking and driving? Mate, you've got to be joking. You have to have two hands on the wheel. I'm wiser than that.

"I only took the bong with me because I'd been constipated for 7 days. When you haven't been to the toilet for [that long], you start worrying... after two pipes, I was quite relieved."

Jury, who has been a truck driver for more than 20 years, believed the constipation was caused by Tramadol, a painkiller he was taking after a shoulder operation.

"Tramadol's got that much codeine in it, it makes you wander all over the road. It was giving me hot and cold flushes and making me feel nauseous. I'd rather have a pipe or bong to relax the mind than take that stuff and feel like you've got a fever."

## Compulsory treatment law reviewed



**NEW ZEALAND** needs a greater range of residential programmes capable of providing for people requiring compulsory drug and alcohol treatment according to the Law Commission.

The Law Commission's latest report, *Compulsory Treatment for Substance Dependence*, proposes replacing the outdated

Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Act 1966 with a new Act that would make the law more user friendly while at the same time providing much greater safeguards for people forced to undergo compulsory treatment.

On average, 74 people are compulsorily detained each year under the current Act.

Currently, there are only four facilities authorised to accept people under compulsory treatment orders after they have completed detoxification in a hospital. None was willing to take young people under 20, and none was available outside the three main centres.

In the course of its review, the Commission heard that family members and others concerned about a person with severe dependence have considerable difficulty applying to the courts for a compulsory treatment order.

In addition, the lack of facilities meant judges had sometimes been forced to decline applications to have a person committed simply because they were unable to find an institution willing to take the person.

"The threshold for forcing someone to undergo treatment is deliberately set high because the law places great value on individual autonomy.

"However, in these rare cases of severe dependence, where a person is at risk of serious harm, it is essential that the assessment process is prompt and easily accessed and that there are enough specialist residential facilities around the country to provide the care," said Law Commission President Sir Geoffrey Palmer.



Under the Commission's proposals, anybody over the age of 18 who believed a person met the criteria for compulsory treatment would be able to contact an official who would arrange for an assessment.

In order to meet the criteria for compulsory treatment, a person would have to have severe substance dependence, be at risk from significant harm and be likely to benefit from, but have refused, treatment.

The initial maximum period of compulsory treatment would be 6 weeks with the potential for the Family Court to extend the period for a further 3 months where a person appeared to have a brain injury caused by drug or alcohol use, so that more time was needed to treat them or make arrangements for their ongoing care.

The key objectives of the period of compulsion were to provide immediate safety from harm and to stabilise the person medically, including providing detoxification. There would be a much greater emphasis on providing comprehensive specialist assessments and long-term treatment plans for the period after discharge.

The new Act would also provide much stronger legal safeguards than the current legislation, ensuring that a person under a compulsory treatment order has the same patient rights and opportunities for review that apply to those held under mental health legislation.

The full report can be found at [www.lawcom.govt.nz](http://www.lawcom.govt.nz).

## Smokers quit in droves



**THE NUMBER** of smokers quitting nearly doubled after tobacco tax hikes last April, new research suggests.

Quit Group Chief Executive Paula Snowden said 4,000 smokers registered with the help line in May 2010, a 93 percent increase on May 2009.

More than two-thirds said the April tax rises were a reason for them deciding to stop smoking, and more than a quarter had not tried to kick the habit in the previous year.

The price of a packet of cigarettes rose by 10 percent and loose tobacco by 24 percent after Parliament passed urgent legislation on 28 April. The increase was followed by a 10 percent rise on all tobacco products in January 2011.

"This is a big hit to peoples' wallets and could quickly amount to the equivalent of a tank of petrol in a week or even a week's rent over a month. A further 10 percent in January 2012 will keep the pressure on," Ms Snowden said.

The tax hikes were followed by a government decision to introduce tighter controls on the display and sale of tobacco.

They include prohibiting any visible display of tobacco products, tighter rules on displaying trading names for tobacco outlets and instant fines for the sale of tobacco to people under 18. The changes

will be made by amending the Smoke-free Environments Act.

The government will also consider requiring tobacco to be sold in plain packaging by 2012.

## Police hands off with pot smoking protesters



**POLICE** say there was no need for them to intervene when pro-cannabis campaigners lit up on the grounds of Parliament during a protest rally.

Senior Sergeant Scott Miller said Police had acted in consultation with the Speaker of the House, Lockwood Smith, and a decision had been made to monitor the situation and act only if there was violence or an attempt to breach the barricades.

"We had a good meeting with the leaders prior to the march; the Police role was basically to bring the protest from the park through town – not interfering with the traffic and the public – to Parliament where they were going to stay in the grass area. We were looking for a nice peaceful morning, which we had, which was good.

Around 50 pro-cannabis campaigners descended on Parliament on 11 November, openly smoking cannabis joints and pipes.

Organiser Dakta Green – who runs a cannabis cafe in Auckland and legally changed his name from the less

colourful Ken Morgan – said the protest followed a 3-month nationwide tour that had collected 4,300 signatures on a petition calling for cannabis law reform.

## Greens miffed at Big Tobacco's law call



**THE GREENS** have stepped up their attack on a planned trans-Pacific free-trade zone after tobacco giant Philip Morris called for the right to challenge anti-smoking laws.

Greens co-leader Russel Norman revealed a Philip Morris submission to the United States Government that insisted any deal must allow challenges to laws such as the regulation of cigarette packaging or bans on tobacco products.

The company is presently suing the Uruguay government over a law requiring graphic warnings on smoking to cover 80 percent of cigarette packs, saying it infringes trademark rights under a free-trade deal with Switzerland, where it has a base.

Mr Norman said the Philip Morris submission on the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership showed it wanted similar powers under that deal.

"Most New Zealanders will be shocked to learn Philip Morris is using trade agreements to try to stop governments from introducing anti-smoking measures. But it is true." ■



## Hopping mad at wallaby abuse

**IRISH** Police have launched an investigation after a wallaby was allegedly plied with ecstasy and alcohol and died at a hotel disco.

The marsupial was let loose among more than 150 revellers dancing at the Clarion Hotel in west Dublin, to the theme tune of Australian television show *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*, the *Belfast Telegraph* reported.

Outraged animal welfare campaigners sparked the investigation after watching a film of the incident on Facebook.

Detectives have questioned Super Circus Sydney owner Alexander Scholl, sited 500 metres away from the hotel, in relation to the incident, but Scholl maintains he is innocent.

Police sources say it is still unclear where the animal had come from or been taken to after the incident.

## Kings Cross injecting centre there to stay



**LEGISLATION** to make the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) a permanent fixture in Sydney's Kings Cross has been passed by both houses of the New South Wales Parliament.

Health Minister Carmel Tebbutt says, in the 9 years it has been operating, the centre has been shown to reduce drug overdoses and deaths

and provide a gateway to treatment and counselling.

"We would all prefer a world where such a facility is not needed," Ms Tebbutt said. "However, we have to deal with the world as it is, not as we would like it be."

The Police Commissioner and the Director-General of NSW Health will continue to oversee the centre, and it will undergo regular statutory evaluations every 5 years.

The centre is run by UnitingCare NSW and is funded from confiscated proceeds of crime.

## Cops top drug test fail rate



**AUSTRALIAN** police are failing drug tests more often than motorists or AFL footballers.

Shock new figures reveal three officers tested positive to illicit drugs in recent weeks, with two facing possible criminal charges. Hundreds more Police will be checked as the force accelerates its drug and alcohol testing.

Testing programme head Acting Inspector John Felton said officers would soon face a better than one in 10 chance of being tested each year.

"To have three (positives) in such a short space of time is disappointing, but it also tells me that our approach is sound," he said.

Police say one in 69 motorists failing roadside drug tests in the first 6 months of the year was a high strike

rate because they had focused on hot spots such as nightclubs, rave parties and truck routes.

The AFL tests all listed players at least once a year and last year conducted more than 1,500 tests, with 14, or one in 112, positive.

## Ban Ki-moon and wife administer methadone



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and his wife Ban Soon-taek visited Cambodia's first methadone maintenance therapy (MMT) in central Phnom Penh as part of a 2-day visit to the Kingdom last October.

While there, Ban Ki-moon unveiled a plaque to commemorate his visit and learned of the objectives of the methadone programme and its achievements since dosing began on 1 July 2010.

The couple met with six methadone patients "who represent the wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds of the current 61 clients enrolled in the programme. Each patient received their respective doses of methadone from the UN Secretary-General and his wife, who had requested the opportunity to assist.

In a speech to a crowd of onlookers, Ban Ki-moon noted that the methadone programme was providing an important service, not just to people struggling to conquer addiction, but to the broader community.

"I commend the government of Cambodia for launching this pilot programme. Evidence shows that such initiatives are more effective than incarceration in addressing the social problems caused by addiction."

## Lebanon claims largest glass of wine

**LEBANON** has claimed a record for the world's biggest glass of wine.

Organisers of a wine festival in Beirut poured around one hundred bottles of Lebanese wine into the giant glass, 2.4 metres high and 1.65 metres wide.

"The previous record was set in Portugal 12 years ago, and I'm proud to announce that Lebanon has achieved a new record," said Guinness World Records adjudicator Liz Smith.

The size of the glass meant that, even with dozens of bottles poured in, it was not even a quarter full. And no one appeared in a rush to drink from the cocktail of red, white and rosé wines, which were sloshed in with abandon.

The wine glass may be a useful accompaniment for Lebanon's other forays into culinary extremes. In recent years, it has claimed the world's biggest servings of kibbeh and tabbouleh, traditional meat and salad dishes, and the biggest bowl of hummus.

## Aussie support for death penalty alive and well

**THERE** seems to be a new mood of decency sweeping the Indonesian judiciary. The Constitutional Court of Indonesia has suggested all

death sentences might be commuted in future.

But the prosecutor of Bali Nine member Scott Rush made it clear during the young man's appeal that the people of Indonesia don't share the senior judges' vision.

"We believe the Indonesian people would consider the death penalty appropriate in this case," he said.

And so do many Australians. Only a year ago, a Morgan poll found 50 percent of Australians wanted Indonesia to execute Rush, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, who were found guilty of trying to smuggle more than 8 kilograms of heroin from Bali into Australia.

That same poll showed support for executing murderers in Australia had fallen to 23 percent – a record low.

Queenslanders (33 percent) and West Australians (38 percent) are the most keen to bring back the noose. Men (36 percent) are keener than women (21 percent), and Australians aged between 25 and 54 are actually more enthusiastic (about 32 percent) than those older and younger (24 percent) about the death penalty for drug smugglers.

## Suspected drug traffickers secretly executed

**REPORTS** to the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran indicate widespread secret group executions of hundreds of inmates continue in Vakilabad prison in Mashad. Most of the executed inmates were charged with drug trafficking.

Thirteen inmates were reportedly executed on 5 October and 10 on 12 October 2010 in Execution Hallway, located near the visitation room. The executions were carried out contrary to Islamic law and without any prior notice for the families involved or any of the victims' lawyers being informed.

On 12 October, Attorney-General Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei stated that suspects of drug-related crimes should be tried in the shortest time possible and not shown any mercy, even when they are low-level traffickers.

"Some of the people arrested with drugs are not the main drug traffickers, and they don't benefit from this materially, but the main drug trafficker deceives these people while he is sitting in a safe place and another person is tried in his place and even executed."

The Campaign has made several unsuccessful attempts to persuade the Iranian authorities to release statistics on the executions.

## Marijuana now legal in Northern Marianas



A **BILL** legalising, regulating and taxing marijuana for medicinal and personal use has passed in the House of Representatives in the Northern Marianas (a commonwealth in political union with the United States). It is one of several new revenue-generating

bills pending in the commonwealth's 17th Legislature.

## Child binge-drinking study released



**THE** Australian Drug Foundation has released some of the findings of a Deakin University study that questioned nearly 4,000 children aged between 10 and 14 on underage drinking.

Among the study's key findings were that children who got alcohol from people other than parents are up to six times more likely to binge drink, and adolescents reporting the presence of family conflict were more likely to obtain alcohol from a person other than a parent.

It also found the more friends a child has who drink alcohol, the more likely that child is to obtain alcohol from people other than a parent.

"We know that, when young people binge drink, they are more at risk of harms such as sexual assault, injury or even death," Australian Drug Foundation Chief Executive John Rogerson said. "It can also set children up for a lifetime of heavy drinking."

The Australian Drug Foundation says an effective measure to protect children is a law that puts parents in control of their children's drinking.

"We need stricter laws to protect our children from the

harms associated with drinking alcohol, particularly as adolescence is such a critical time for brain development."

Deakin University's School of Psychology is due to release a paper detailing the findings in coming months.

## Costumed caper



A **NEBRASKA** police officer pulled over a pick-up being driven erratically and arrested Matthew Nieveen, 19, for driving under the influence and being a minor in possession of alcohol.

According to a Police report, Nieveen had watery eyes and slurred speech and smelled like alcohol. He was also dressed as a PBT (preliminary breath testing) alcohol sensor and had been attending a Halloween party prior to the stop. His blood alcohol measured more than twice the legal limit of .08 percent. The legal limit for minors is zero.

Last Halloween, an 18-year-old in a similar outfit was arrested for driving drunk in Oxford, Ohio.

In other Halloween costume news, Nebraska officers also arrested a French maid and someone described in reports as a "naughty border patrol agent". Both women were under 21 and were arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence and being minors in possession of alcohol. ■



# Is alcohol cheaper than bottled water?

University of Otago research claiming that some alcohol in New Zealand is more affordable than bottled water attracted an avalanche of publicity in October last year. It made the front page of the *New Zealand Herald*, and appeared in international news outlets from Asia to Latin America. Yet almost as soon as this research was announced, it came under attack from certain quarters. Could alcohol really be cheaper than bottled water in the Land of the Long White Cloud?

Mythbusters investigates...

**THE** research in question focused primarily on evaluating trends in alcohol affordability over time. Using price data collected by Statistics New Zealand for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and average hourly earnings from the New Zealand Income Survey, the authors demonstrated that alcohol has clearly become more affordable over the past decade. Next, they looked specifically at the price of discounted alcohol and compared this with the price of bottled water. Startlingly, some alcohol was found to be cheaper than bottled water.

Those refuting the finding point out that the study did not compare equal volumes of alcohol and water. But attempting to draw meaningful comparisons on the basis of volume is problematic because alcohol comes in a great many types and strengths. While the alcohol strength of beer typically ranges between 3.5 and 5 percent, most wine ranges between 11 and 14 percent, while some spirits can exceed 45 percent. Alcohol can also be consumed in various ways: spirits are frequently diluted with non-alcoholic mixers while wine and beer are consumed straight.

This is why best practice when quantifying alcohol is to use the concept of a standard drink. One standard drink contains 10g of alcohol and is the amount of alcohol found in an average 330ml can of beer, a 100ml glass of wine

or 30ml of straight spirits. When measuring alcohol, it is the number of standard drinks, not the amount of liquid that matters.

Using a website that documents discounts on alcohol at outlets throughout New Zealand ([www.lips.co.nz](http://www.lips.co.nz)), the researchers found that 3 litres of white cask wine at 11.5 percent alcohol could be bought for \$16.99, which works out at 62 cents per standard drink. Likewise, 12 330ml bottles of beer at 5 percent was selling for \$9.99, which works out at 64 cents per standard drink. A litre of spirits at 40 percent could be bought for \$25.00, equivalent to 78 cents per standard drink.

**“When measuring alcohol, it is the number of standard drinks, not the amount of liquid that matters.”**

These prices were then compared with the price of 250ml of bottled water using the average 2010 CPI data – 67 cents. This volume was selected because it is a standard serving size for non-alcoholic beverages recognised by nutritionists and equivalent to a typical drinking glass.

At 62 cents per standard drink (cask wine) and 64 cents per standard drink (beer), some discounted alcohol is indeed cheaper than bottled water.

Mythbusters visited the website [www.lips.co.nz](http://www.lips.co.nz) on several occasions and was always able to find discounts equal to (or better) than those identified by the researchers.

Whilst the media may have sensationalised their findings, the researchers themselves were explicit about their results. “Some alcohol is more affordable than bottled water.”

This is undeniable and a conclusion reached on the basis of robust methodology and data. Importantly, the authors never claimed that all alcohol is cheaper than all bottled water.

The notion that price comparisons between alcohol and water should have been done on a volumetric basis is fundamentally flawed. Nonetheless, some alcohol is cheaper than bottled water even on a ml for ml basis.

As Sir Geoffrey Palmer noted, “A can of beer or an RTD can be bought for 1 or 2 dollars in many retail outlets. This is less than we pay for bottled water.”

A quick browse at a nearby discount liquor store was all it took to prove that he, too, is absolutely correct. ■

## Reference

Gunasekara FI, Wilson N. Very cheap drinking in New Zealand: some alcohol is more affordable than bottled water and nearly as cheap as milk. *NZMJ* 15 October 2010, Vol 123 No 1324:97-101.

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Do yourself a Favour, take a moment to consider what a pause of 28 alcohol-free days could do for you, for your liver, for society and for young people impacted by alcohol and other drugs. Check out [FebFast.org.nz](http://FebFast.org.nz) to sign up or support a pause for the better.

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a pause for the better

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