

## 2019 MISUSE OF DRUGS AMENDMENT BILL

# ↘ Influencing Parliament: making submissions to select committees and lobbying mps.



2019  
Misuse of Drugs  
Amendment Bill

## HOW THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS WORKS

### Drafting

Firstly, a bill is drafted by government, or sometimes by a Member of Parliament (called a 'member's bill'), which sets out a proposed new law, or changes to an existing law. The Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill is a government bill, introduced by the Minister of Health, David Clark. It sets out some proposed changes to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975.

### First reading

New bills go to the House for a 'First Reading' where they are debated for two hours. MPs then vote on whether to dismiss the bill or refer it to select committee.

### Select committees and submissions

Select committees take a detailed look at issues, from government policy and proposed laws, to wider topics like the economy. There are 17 select committees in the New Zealand Parliament, each made up of MPs from political parties across the House. A big part of the committees' work is to consider in detail most of the new laws that come before Parliament, hearing submissions from the public and advice from officials before making decisions on how to improve legislation.

Public submissions are called for with a cut-off date — in this case, written submissions are due **Thursday 11 April 2019**.

The select committee then reads and listens to the submissions, receives lots of advice from government officials and then discusses the bill in detail to make any changes they see fit.

### Second reading and Committee of the Whole House

The bill then comes back to Parliament for a 'Second Reading' and discussion, where any changes are made.

### Third reading

The final step is the 'Third Reading' in Parliament, which consists of another two hour debate by MPs. After this, the legislation is passed in its final form and becomes an 'Act'.



## Making a submission on the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill

The Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill is currently being considered by the Health Committee, which is chaired by Louisa Wall (Labour). Other members include Shane Reti, Matt Doocey, Michael Woodhouse and Nicky Wagner from National, Liz Craig and Angie Warren-Clark from Labour, and Jenny Marcroft from NZ First. Committee membership can change, so there may be some different MPs involved when oral submissions are heard later this year.

The Health Committee has called for written submissions from the public (due 11 April). They want to fully understand how the potential changes in the Bill affect you and/or your organisation. The bill proposes:

- 1 To reclassify AMB-FUBINACA and 5F-ADB as Class A drugs
- 2 To affirm that Police should in most cases exercise their discretion not to prosecute those caught in possession of any drug for personal use (not just synthetics). Police must consider whether a prosecution is required in the public interest, and whether a health-centred or therapeutic approach would be more beneficial.
- 3 To introduce a temporary drug class order so new harmful drugs can quickly be classified in the Misuse of Drugs Act as they reach the market.

**We really encourage you to make a submission – it's not hard to do and it could make a real impact on the final legislation.**

### SOME KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

- Get your submission in on time — often select committees refuse to accept late submissions.
- It's fine to make submissions both as an individual and as part of a group you belong to. Group submissions tend to have more weight, but an individual submission can also have a big impact on MPs, especially when it's backed up with an oral presentation.

### INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SUBMISSION

- Who you are and your contact details.
- Make it clear at the beginning whether or not you want to appear before the select committee to make an oral submission. We really recommend you do, as it can add weight to your submission.
- If it's a group submission, provide more information about the size, nature and kaupapa of the organisation.
- Make it clear if you support or oppose the bill, and why. It is important to give clear reasons.
- If you support the bill but would like to see parts of it changed, be very clear about what you want done.
- Provide any background material that will support your points. This can include research and/or personal and community stories. Stories personalise the issue for the select committee and help them understand why the topic is important to you and how this Bill will affect your life and community.



## BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SHARE

- Submissions are made publicly available and will appear on Parliament's website after the select committee has considered them.
- The basic rule of thumb is don't write anything in your submission that you don't want public. If there is information you are worried about sharing publicly (eg sharing a story about a client), consider:
  - talking about your personal experience more generally, without giving specifics
  - using a pseudonym
  - asking for advice from the Health Committee Secretariat (04 817 8307, [he@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:he@parliament.govt.nz)). Sometimes submissions can be heard in private.

## STYLE — MAKING YOUR SUBMISSION MORE EFFECTIVE

- Be direct, clear and to the point — make sure they know what changes you want.
- Your message needs to make sense, even to people who don't know much about the issue.
- Even if you totally disagree with the legislation, try to come up with useful alternatives and solutions.
- Talk about your own experiences— why does this issue matter to you?
- Good layout, spelling and grammar add weight to your arguments and make it more likely MPs will read what you say more carefully.
- You can include photos, pictures, graphics, graphs — all these can make powerful statements in their own right.



## ORAL SUBMISSIONS

You can specify in your written submission that you would like to appear in person before the select committee. Doing this can significantly increase the impact of your submission. MPs tend to pay more attention to someone speaking to them directly.

An oral submission is not as daunting as it might seem. MPs are just regular people and they need to hear from the public so they know what people think. We are happy to help you prepare your oral submission – just get in touch! (Contact details below).

If you would like to submit but are not able to travel for health reasons, please explain that in your submission. Sometimes select committees will travel to hear submissions.

Usually a few weeks after written submissions have been received you will receive an email or letter from Parliament informing you when you should attend.

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### SOME HINTS ON MAKING ORAL SUBMISSIONS:

- **Be prepared.** The Clerk of the Select committee will give you a set time and may cut you short once your allotted time is finished. You need to work out how you will get your points across clearly in a short timeframe.
- **Be direct.** Stick to the main points and try to keep your focus — and the MPs' — on the main points you are trying to make. Do your best not to get distracted.  
You can just make one or two clear points (if you want). Don't feel like you have to cover every part of the issue.
- **Tell a story.** You will have more impact if you can use some of your time to tell a story that brings life and emotion to the points you are making. (If you don't have a story, don't worry).
- **Stay calm and polite.** Try not to upset MPs unnecessarily, even if they seem aggressive, annoying or ignorant to you. If they ask you questions, it's a good sign they are paying attention.
- **Save time for questions.** The MPs might want to ask questions so make sure you save some of your submission time for this.  
You don't need to know everything. If MPs ask you a question and you are not able to answer, it is better to say "I don't know," than to make something up.  
If an MP asks you a question, keep your answer short and to the point. It's OK to take a moment to think about your answer and maybe note down a couple of thoughts before you start.
- **Song, drama or cultural presentations** can sometimes be used as part of the oral submission process.
- **You can go in early** to watch other people make their submissions. It can help to go along early to watch others making theirs so you can get a feel for how it works.

### THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT WHAT INFORMATION YOU SHARE

Oral submissions are generally open to the public. As with the written submissions, the basic rule of thumb is don't share anything that you don't want to be public.

You can request that your submission be heard in private or secret. Private evidence remains confidential until a committee reports back to Parliament, but then details could in theory still be publicly released. Secret evidence is never publicly released.

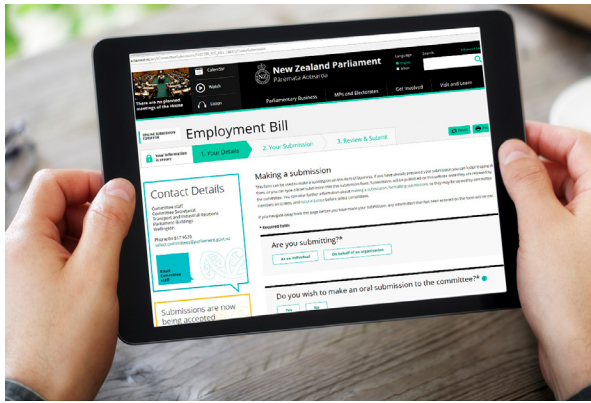
You must provide a committee with good reasons as to why your submission should be accepted as private or secret. All committee members must agree to accept the evidence as private or secret, and sometimes committees choose not to receive this type of evidence.



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Indicate if you want to do your oral submission in private or in secret on your written submission or speak to the Health Committee Secretariat (04 817 8307) or [he@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:he@parliament.govt.nz)).

**More information about making a submission, what to expect and the process can be found at [www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/how-to-make-a-submission](http://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/how-to-make-a-submission).**



## OTHER WAYS YOU CAN INFLUENCE MPS

As well as doing a submission, you can consider lobbying your local MP and/or any list MPs that live locally (or in fact any MP). This means sharing your views with them to influence how they understand the issue. This is important because all MPs vote on new laws. If voters lobby them they know the issue is important and will put more thought into how they vote.

Here are some of the main ways you can contact MPs to persuade them of your point of view.

### **Send an email**

All MPs have an email address in this format: [firstname.lastname@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:firstname.lastname@parliament.govt.nz)

### **Write a letter**

*Postage to MPs is free.*

[insert MP name]  
Freepost Parliament  
Private Bag 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

### **Good ideas for letters and emails:**

- Address your letter to the particular MP, rather than using a general greeting.
- Keep it polite and respectful. MPs are humans too and will pay more attention to people who treat them with respect, even when there is total political disagreement.
- Always give your name and contact details – anonymous correspondence is usually put in the bin, or sometimes seen as a security threat.
- Include a subject line or header which says what issue you are writing about.
- Be very clear about why you are writing, the points you want to make, and what you want from the MP. Good spelling and grammar helps.

## Meeting with an MP in person

Consider asking for a meeting with your local MP. You are likely to have a greater impact if you sit down with them personally and explain why this is an important issue for you, and what you would like them to do about it.

### Points to remember when meeting an MP:

- All MPs get a vote – list MPs and electorate MPs – so it is important they all understand the issue and why it is important.
- Be prepared for your meeting – ask how much time you will have, and make sure you organise your time so that you can make a brief presentation and also have time for the MP to ask questions.
- It is helpful to know the MP's basic position on the issue before you meet them, but this is not always possible.
- It helps to bring a written document with you – a short one-pager with bullet points is useful, backed by any research material you may have. The MP needs a document to take away with them clearly stating what you want from them and how they can contact you if they want more information.
- Be polite and friendly, even if you are arguing with them. Make sure you listen carefully to what the MP is saying and asking, and try to respond to what they are interested in (rather than just your own agenda). Honest conversations are likely to get you further.
- When visiting an MP, you can go with two or more people, but be cautious of groups that are too large. Sometimes the message can get lost in a large group because everyone is trying to speak, unless you are very well organised.
- Be willing to provide more material after the meeting, in case the MP asks for it.



Any questions? Need any help?

Just get in touch, +64 4 801 6303 or [admin@drugfoundation.org.nz](mailto:admin@drugfoundation.org.nz)



**AT THE HEART  
OF THE MATTER,  
NZ DRUG  
FOUNDATION.**

Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa



**HAVE YOUR SAY.**

**submissions due Thursday 11 April 2019**