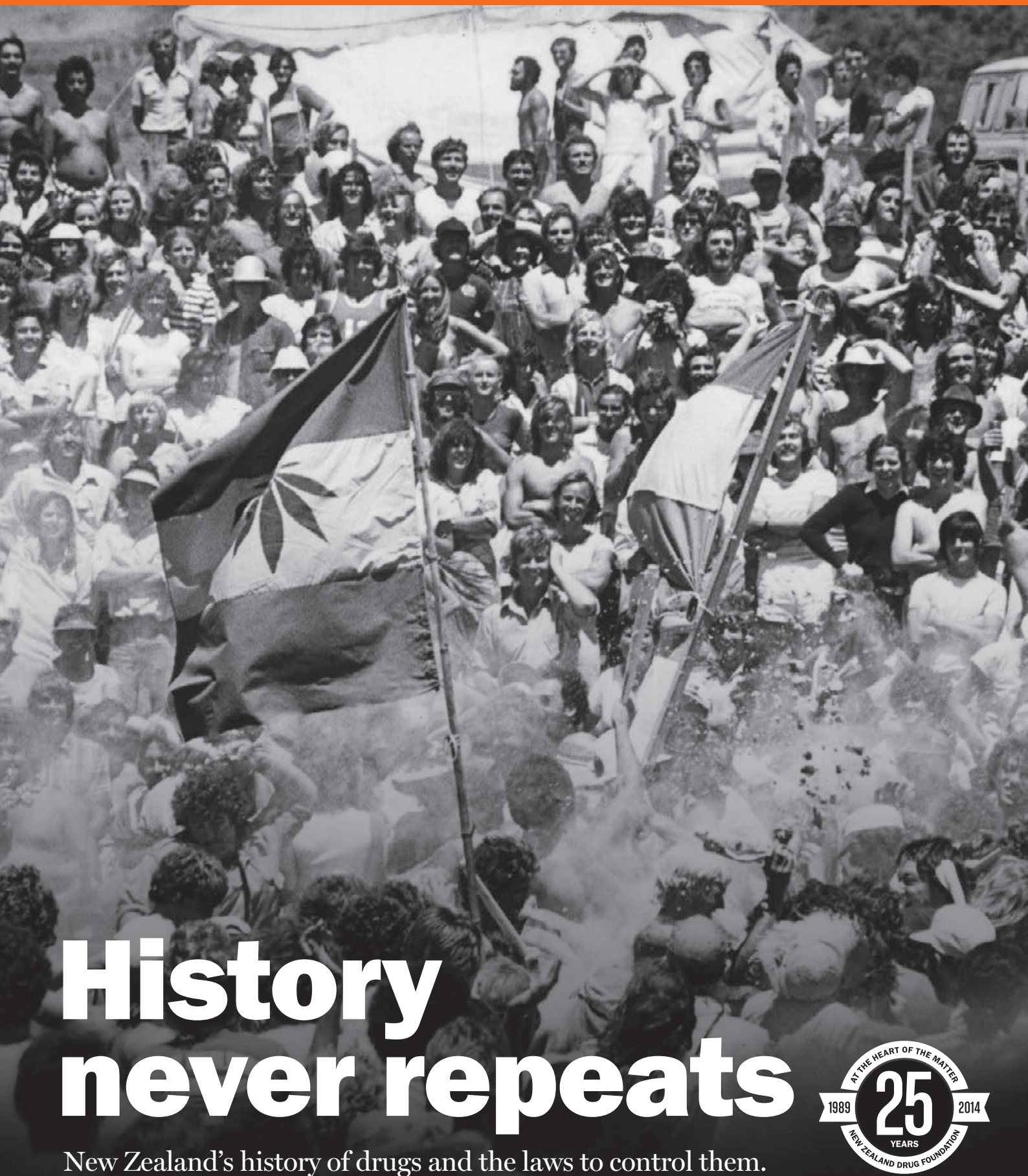


# Matters of Substance.

AUGUST 2014 | Volume 25 Issue No.3 | [www.drugfoundation.org.nz](http://www.drugfoundation.org.nz)

AT THE HEART  
OF THE MATTER,  
NZ DRUG  
FOUNDATION.

Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa



## History never repeats

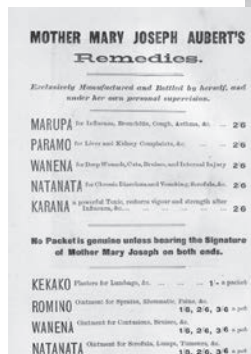
New Zealand's history of drugs and the laws to control them.



# History never repeats

New Zealand's history of drugs and the laws to control them

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A survey of the long history of imbibing in Aotearoa New Zealand

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The pioneering chemist who created MDMA spawned many imitators but was an individual to the last

20

## Doing LAPs

With few Local Alcohol Plans in place, communities are still responding to alcohol licence applications one by one

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## Face trashed

Social media is a new frontier for alcohol companies, but does virtual marketing need better regulation?

## Become a member

The New Zealand Drug Foundation has been at the heart of major alcohol and other drug policy debates for over 20 years. During that time, we have demonstrated a strong commitment to advocating policies and practices based on the best evidence available.

You can help us. A key strength of the Drug Foundation lies in its diverse membership base. As a member of the Drug Foundation, you will receive information about major alcohol and other drug policy challenges. You can also get involved in our work to find solutions to those challenges.

Our membership includes health promoters, primary health and community organisations, researchers, students, schools and boards of trustees, policy makers, and addiction treatment agencies and workers.

**Membership and subscription enquiries**  
membership@drugfoundation.org.nz  
or visit our website.

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A new Global Commission on Drugs report sets out an agenda for reform, says Steve Rolles

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## OPINION Decriminalise cannabis, decriminalise Māori?

Hirini Kaa opposes legal changes that might increase access by Māori to cannabis and invites us to tackle bigger questions of social justice

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## Q&A Lotta Dann

Journalist and mother Lotta Dann wrote about her journey to sobriety and is now helping hundreds as they make their own way

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



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**Brand development/  
graphic design**  
Insight +64 4 801 6644  
talktous@designedbyinsight.com  
www.designedbyinsight.com

**NZ Drug Foundation**  
4th Floor, 265 Wakefield Street  
PO Box 3082, Wellington,  
New Zealand  
p +64 4 801 6303





**ROSS BELL**  
Executive Director

Should we lament the fact that, even though this was an election year, there was no considered discussion of drug policy ideas between political parties? On the other hand, knowing how difficult sensible political engagement is on this tricky issue, should we just be quietly grateful?

It's Catch-22. Drug policy deserves greater political attention, and there's no good reason why parties can't develop meaningful manifestos. But they don't. Instead, drug debates are typically characterised by strident,

ideological and simplistic rhetoric – “you're either with us or against us”. We only need look back a few months to the unnecessary legal high U-turn, which only happened because of election year sensitivities.

While drug policy didn't feature in the election, we were able to glean party positions from responses to a *New Zealand Herald* poll showing, for the first time, majority support (52 percent) for cannabis law reform.

The National Party retained its blind faith in the status quo. Labour, and not for the first time, claimed it's not a priority. So did the Greens, who previously were big supporters of reform. ACT, the party of individual rights and liberty, copped out saying they'll leave it to their MPs' consciences. The only party that tried to develop a position was Internet MANA, but its leadership just couldn't hold things together.

It's no longer tenable to say drug policy is a low priority. Yes, it's hard and complex, and solutions will be tricky to come by. But political leadership needs to be shown.

What are our priorities for drug policy reform? Drawing inspiration from the Wellington Declaration, there is much to do. Let's start with:

- Scaling up harm-reduction services, especially needle exchanges, and replicate the successful Christchurch hep C clinic in major cities.
- Giving real effect to recommendations from the alcohol marketing forum and not shy away from alcohol pricing.
- Supporting schools to keep young New Zealanders engaged in education, including those busted with booze or pot.
- Rebalancing unfair funding between DHB and NGO addiction treatment services, and investing more in treatment and recovery efforts.
- Reforming our 40-year-old Misuse of Drugs Act so the law supports rather than hinders health-focused drug policy.

If our politicians continue to shy away from drug debates, we should invite them to take a backseat and allow the public to have the necessary dialogue instead.

You can still read and sign up to the Wellington Declaration – [nzdrug.org/wellingtondec](http://nzdrug.org/wellingtondec)

@FIORAAETERNA A friend just referred to the FBI's problem with trying to find hackers who don't smoke weed as a “highering problem”. I give up. MAY 21

@STEPHENATHOME A new study says schizophrenia and pot smoking are genetically linked – but don't worry, another study says you're just being paranoid. JUNE 25

@RUSTYROCKETS Penalties; the crack-cocaine of football – we know it's wrong but what a buzz. #BRAvsCHI JUNE 29

@DUNCANSTOTT “Drink responsibly” is the alcohol industry's version of “some of my best friends are black”. JULY 11

@WHO WHO recommends removing laws criminalizing sexual behaviours, drug use, gender expression or perceived sexual orientation #HIV JULY 16

@THESTARTRUST @PeterDunneMP confirms “That while the case for regulating #nzlegalhighs is very strong, doing it well does require some trial and error.” JULY 23

@RICHIEHARDCORE ‘You would possibly be the most annoying person ever on drugs.’ – @Amberleigh\_Jack Personally I reckon I'd be awesome but we'll never know. JULY 31

#### \* KEY EVENTS & DATES

17-20 SEP 2014	Cutting Edge 2014 Dunedin, New Zealand <a href="http://cuttingedge.org.nz">cuttingedge.org.nz</a>
6-8 OCT 2014	NZ Population Health Congress Auckland, New Zealand <a href="http://pophealthcongress.org.nz">pophealthcongress.org.nz</a>
9-12 NOV 2014	APSAD Scientific Conference Adelaide, Australia <a href="http://apsad.org.au">apsad.org.au</a>
12-13 NOV 2014	2nd International Symposium on Drugs and Driving 12-13 November Wellington, New Zealand <a href="http://www.drugdriving.org.nz">www.drugdriving.org.nz</a>

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[drugfoundation.org.nz/connect](http://drugfoundation.org.nz/connect)



# NZ.



## 01 RESEARCH TO TRACK CHANGES FROM NEW SALE OF LIQUOR ACT

A \$1.2 million Massey University project led by Professor Sally Casswell will investigate changes to alcohol consumption brought about by the new alcohol legislation and will look to predict what further behavioural changes might occur. The same people will be followed over time, and their drinking patterns and purchasing behaviours will be studied.

## RESOURCES

Read more on the story here:  
[nzdrug.org/ProfCasswell12](http://nzdrug.org/ProfCasswell12)

## 02 Who stole the power?

**\$17,685**

A ROTORUA man has been sentenced to nearly four years jail after stealing almost \$18,000 worth of electricity to power his cannabis-growing operation. His other 'hobbies' included unlawful possession of a firearm, assaulting Police, refusing a blood alcohol test and dangerous driving. John Kenneth David, 53, was caught with around 200 plants, which could produce an estimated annual turnover of \$162,000. Police found he had tampered with his power meter, stopping it from recording power consumption.

## 03 Bar staff vs predators



WELLINGTON bouncers and bartenders are now being trained to step in if they spot predatory behaviour and think someone may be in danger of sexual violence. A typical example might be a man buying drinks for a woman and secretly ordering water for himself. The Sexual Abuse Prevention Network, a collaboration between Rape Crisis, the Sexual Abuse Help Foundation and WellStop, launched the Wellington Safer Bars Alliance in August.

## 04 0.05 at last!



A LAW PASSED in late July will lower the legal blood alcohol concentration to 0.05 percent for New Zealand drivers and will take effect 1 December. The law means an average adult should not consume more than two standard drinks in an hour before driving. A zero alcohol tolerance for drivers under 20 remains. Supporters say the law complements the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act and will have a positive effect on drinking culture. However, opponents point out few people are actually caught drink driving at these low limits.

## 06

**0.2%**

HIV AMONGST  
INJECTING DRUG USERS

A RECENT NZ NEEDLE Exchange study shows HIV amongst injecting drug users in New Zealand has fallen to just 0.2 percent-the lowest ever recorded here.

NZ Needle Exchange Director Charles Henderson attributes the decline to the early introduction of the needle exchange programme in New Zealand. He says preventing the virus from entering the injecting population has also reduced its potential to spread more widely.



whānau access to information, tools and support so they can assist young people to get the right kind of help when they need it.

## RESOURCES

Visit the website here:  
[www.commonground.org.nz](http://www.commonground.org.nz)

## 05 Common Ground



Part of the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project, Common Ground, helps parents, families, whānau and friends of young people to better support them to enjoy positive mental health and wellbeing.

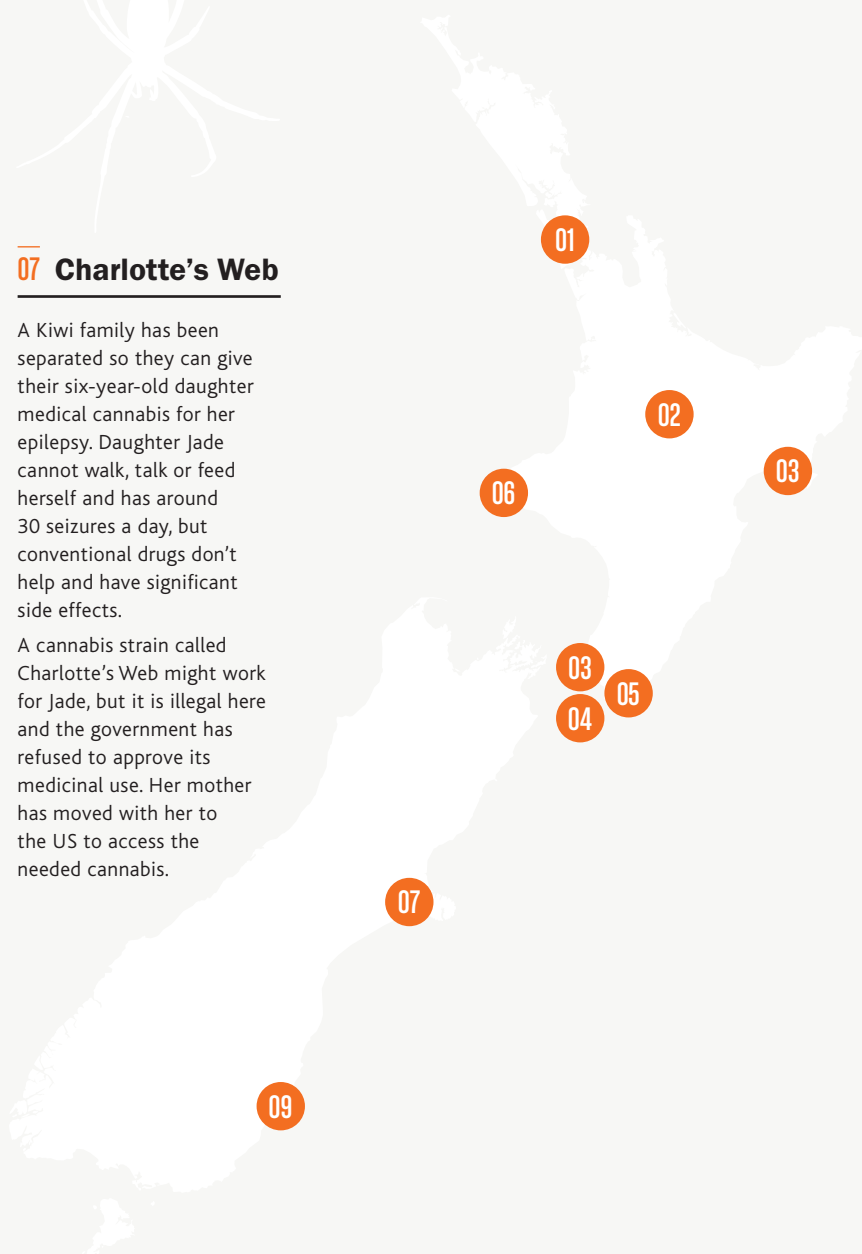
The website, phone line and information pack service give



## 07 Charlotte's Web

A Kiwi family has been separated so they can give their six-year-old daughter medical cannabis for her epilepsy. Daughter Jade cannot walk, talk or feed herself and has around 30 seizures a day, but conventional drugs don't help and have significant side effects.

A cannabis strain called Charlotte's Web might work for Jade, but it is illegal here and the government has refused to approve its medicinal use. Her mother has moved with her to the US to access the needed cannabis.



## 08 Two more years, boys

AT A JUNE meeting in Australia, trans-Tasman food safety ministers allowed the alcohol industry two more years to 'voluntarily' warn consumers about the risks of drinking during pregnancy.

The two years Food Standards Australia New Zealand had previously given the industry to include the warnings expired in December 2013.

The extension came despite an independent audit undertaken in Australia that looked at 250 products and found only 37 percent carried Drinkwise consumer information and only 26 percent carried pregnancy warnings.



## 09 Fair funding campaign launched

COMMUNITY mental health and addiction services provided by NGOs are facing financial failure as funding provided by district health boards is not covering cost increases, says Marion Blake, CEO of Platform Trust, a national network of mental health and addiction NGOs.

"We have reached a critical point and have launched the Fair Funding campaign to seek an urgent restoration of a sustainable funding path for the mental health and addiction NGO sector."

### RESOURCES

See the campaign here: [www.fairfunding.org.nz](http://www.fairfunding.org.nz)

## 10 Pot opposition declining

# 52.4%

DECriminalISE  
OR MAKE LEGAL



A June Herald-DigiPoll survey showed a third of those polled thought smoking cannabis should not attract a conviction, while a fifth said it should be legalised. Forty-five percent said it should remain illegal.

However, the government remains steadfast in opposing law reform. "We do not think there are any benefits for decriminalising or legalising cannabis, for medicinal purposes or otherwise, which

outweigh the harm it causes society," said Justice Minister Judith Collins.

### RESOURCES

See full survey results [nzdrug.org/DigiPoll52](http://nzdrug.org/DigiPoll52)



# World.

01



## Turkey bans Down Under drinkers

It seems the Turks want to ban alcohol for Kiwis and Australians who come to honour those killed in the Gallipoli campaign.

Thousands of Antipodeans gather every year at Gallipoli to honour their ancestors killed in the 1915 battle, but a Turkish parliamentary committee favours a bill, introduced by the Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party, that would change the status of the Gallipoli peninsula from a national park to a historical area, where consuming alcoholic drinks is strictly banned.

## 02 Sniffer dogs cause overdoses

Art vs Science guitarist Dan McNamee wants sniffer dogs banned from music festivals because they cause panic-induced overdoses. He said Australian politicians need to think more about health and wellbeing instead of violence, power, rules and restrictions.

"We're a nation descended from convicts, we're going to break the rules!"

In 2009, 17-year-old Gemma Thoms died at the music festival Big Day Out in Perth of a drug overdose. According to her friend, she swallowed ecstasy tablets out of 'fear' of being detected by sniffer dogs.

03

# \$25 FINE

Starting late July, getting caught with a bag of weed, a blunt or a bong by Washington DC Police has resulted only in a ticket and a \$25 fine. After a Congressional review, possession of less than an ounce of cannabis has been decriminalised. Apart from Washington and Colorado, where cannabis is now legal, DC's legislation is perhaps the most progressive drug law in the US.

## 04 Methadone withdrawal costing lives

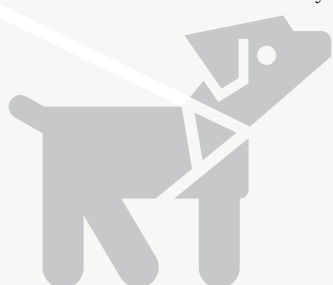


THE DEVASTATING effects of the Russian 'ban on methadone' are being felt in Crimea, with as many as 20 former methadone patients having died since its implementation, according to a report by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Countless others are said to be suffering from untreated diseases such as HIV/AIDs and hepatitis. However, Russian authorities deny methadone has any efficacy and say the money and interests of pharmaceutical firms stand behind it. They insist those who need it are receiving proper care.

## 05 Arthur's Day pass



AFTER five years, Guinness has scrapped Arthur's Day, a celebration established to commemorate Guinness's 250th anniversary, but it denies negative press around binge drinking was the reason. Instead, it will support Guinness Amplify-a new music programme to get behind emerging Irish artists. "We view Arthur's Day as a success. There is a bigger issue here and that is alcohol consumption in Ireland. Arthur's Day was brought into that discussion, but that was not the deciding factor in replacing it," said Guinness Marketing Director Stephen O'Kelly.



05

07

08

10

01

04

06

# \$2.3B

# USD

THE AMOUNT NEEDED  
IN 2015 ALONE TO FUND  
HIV SERVICES FOR PEOPLE  
WHO INJECT DRUGS  
AROUND THE WORLD

To coincide with the 20th International AIDS Conference, which took place recently in Melbourne, Harm Reduction International (HRI) and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance have issued a report warning global funding for HIV prevention for people who inject drugs is in crisis. Donor withdrawal, government neglect of people who use drugs and overspending on enforcement are a “perfect storm”, and it will be impossible to achieve an AIDS-free generation without concerted action.



## RESOURCES

Read the report here:  
[nzdrug.org/1pDFova](http://nzdrug.org/1pDFova)

### 07 Sales ban could eradicate smoking



**UK DOCTORS** are pushing to permanently ban cigarette sales to everyone born after the year 2000. The British Medical Association has voted to put its entire weight behind lobbying for the ban.

Specialist Registrar in Public Health Medicine Tim Crocker-Buque said this could be a chance for the UK to be the first nation to completely eradicate cigarettes. 80 percent of UK smokers start as teenagers as a result of intense peer pressure.

### 08 Britain sets driving limits



**UK DRIVERS** will be allowed to get behind the wheel if they have traces of illegal drugs in their system under new drug-driving limits. But motorists who exceed certain thresholds of eight prescription and eight illegal drugs, including cannabis and cocaine, will be prosecuted in the same way as drink drivers. The limits for individual drugs reflect the speed at which they are broken down by the body and are designed to prevent people being prosecuted for taking medically approved quantities of prescribed drugs.

### 09 Cannabis demand in the tonnes



**PROJECTED** demand for cannabis in Colorado is much higher than anticipated at 130 tonnes this year, a state revenue authority says. More than 90 percent of demand is from residents, while out-of-state visitors accounted for only about nine tonnes. The report said tax figures showed retail supply is growing in the state, while supply via medical dispensaries had remained relatively constant.

### 10 Does the pope support legalisation?



**DESPITE** being more liberal than plenty of past pontiffs, Pope Francis says he staunchly opposes the legalisation of drugs, including cannabis. “Drug addiction is an evil, and with evil, there can be no compromise,” he said at a recent drug enforcement conference in Rome. “No to every type of drug use. It is as simple as that.” He says the solution to addiction lies in education and promoting more positive values.

# History never repeats?

## New Zealand's history of drugs and the laws to control them

Just when did people living in the land of the long white cloud begin using drugs? What turned them on? And off? When were the rules changed? **Russell Brown** surveys the long history of imbibing in Aotearoa New Zealand.



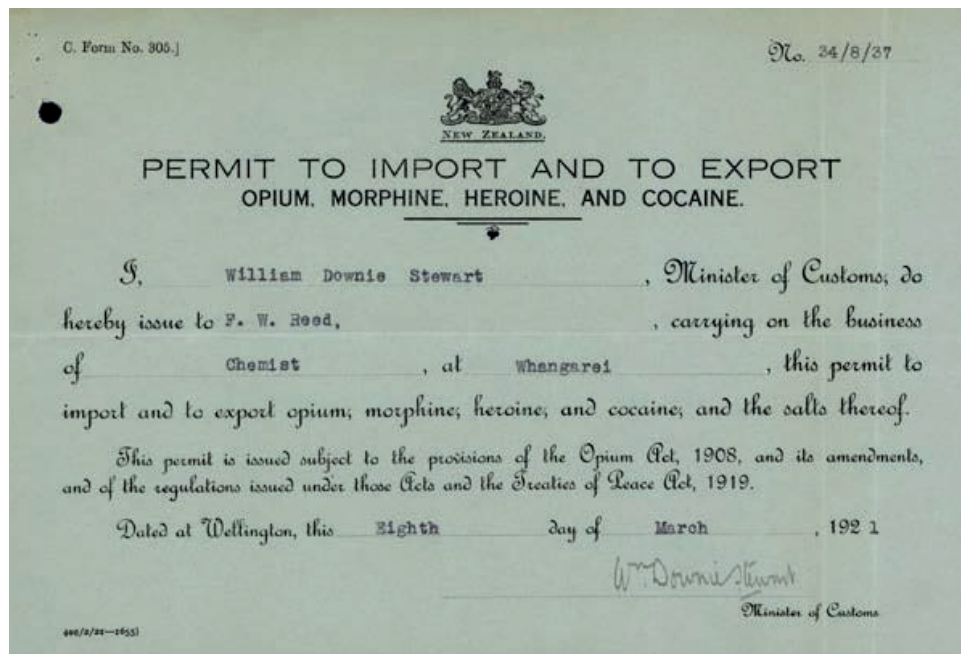
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ACKLANDS  
TURNING



Drugs once legally used for medicinal purposes were ultimately restricted

Māori man smoking a pipe, 1847



RUSSELL BROWN



New Zealand has a prominent place in many of the global narratives around psychoactive drugs. We have led the world in seeking new ways to curb

the use of some – and in our prodigious national appetite for others. We were the world's keenest consumers of LSD for years and continue to sit near the top of the table for amphetamines, MDMA and cannabis. We were virtually born into binge drinking as a nation.

And it all started from... nothing.

The accepted view is that, before the arrival of Europeans, Māori were one of the few societies that had no intoxicants. This does not necessarily mean they had no use for psychoactive substances.

Kawakawa (a relative of kava), pukatea (containing the analgesic alkaloid pukateine, which has a similar chemical structure to morphine) and *radula marginata* (a species of liverwort containing the cannabinoid perrottetinine) were all used as rongoā, or traditional Māori medicines. And all can now be purchased from specialist ethnobotanical suppliers and turn up occasionally in reports in the forums of drug experience sites like Bluelight and The Shroomery.

But there's no evidence these plants were used outside of a medical context by Māori, who were vulnerable when tobacco and alcohol were introduced by European

visitors in the late 18th century. While some Māori leaders strongly discouraged the use of both, they soon became currency in trade. A pattern of tobacco use by Māori women took hold in the early 19th century (a time when smoking was frowned upon for European women) and persists to this day.

Heavy alcohol use was characteristic of 19th century settlers, but Māori didn't catch up until the 1890s. In her Te Ara article 'Māori smoking, alcohol and drugs – tūpeka, waipiro me te tarukino – Māori use of alcohol', Megan Cook suggests that alcohol "was used to blunt the grief Māori communities experienced as a result of high rates of death and loss of land".

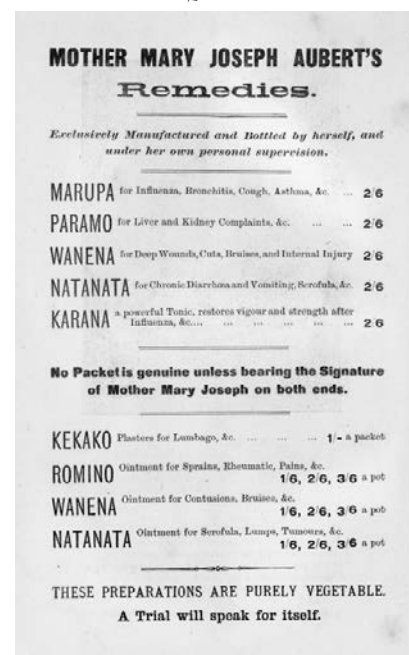
“Alcohol was used to blunt the grief Māori communities experienced as a result of high rates of death and loss of land.”

MEGAN COOK

While a series of alcohol regulations specific to Māori were passed in the 1800s, the colonists themselves had ready access to opium (as laudanum), cannabis and even cocaine. The patent medicine Chlorodyne (which contained morphine, chloroform and cannabis) was popular and even given to children, and it seems likely



“Māori were vulnerable when tobacco and alcohol were introduced by European visitors in the late 18th century. While some Māori leaders strongly discouraged the use of both, they soon became currency in trade.”



that the British experience of Chlorodyne addiction and overdose was equally visited on the colonies. Cannabis cigarettes were widely advertised in 19th century newspapers as a cure for asthma and insomnia. In the 1860s, some migrant Chinese miners brought opium smoking to New Zealand.

Although some official efforts were made to curb the use of opium, it wasn't until 1912 and the International Opium Convention (the precursor to the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs) that the trade in opiates and later cannabis was more seriously restricted, ultimately via the Dangerous Drugs Act 1927.

At the same time, a new popular mood was driven by wire stories from the British and American press. In 1911, the *Auckland Star* billed negotiations over the Opium Convention as a matter of "Checking the Dope Fiend". A lurid story published in 1919 by the *Marlborough Express*, on the death of musical actress Billie Carleton reported that, "The dope fiends of London seek only one thing – the feeling of wellbeing, of exhilaration, the elimination of time and space."

We had our own stories: in 1917, there were reports that "shirkers" were seeking to avoid the call-up for war by taking "dope" so they would fail the medical. And by the 1930s, when the *Auckland Star* ran a glossary headed 'Argot of the Dope Fiends' ("H" for heroin, "Candy" for cocaine and "Happy dust" for "any powdered dope"), New Zealand was very

much in line with the international consensus on drugs.

Well, nearly. In 'Drugs – Restricting drugs, 1866 to 1965' for Te Ara, Jock Phillips writes:

"Despite these restrictions there was still considerable use of the drugs under prescription for medical purposes. In the late 1940s it was discovered that doctors were prescribing heroin so freely that New Zealand had one of the world's highest rates of use per person. By 1955 this had been drastically reduced."

Remarkably, New Zealand also had medical marijuana well into the 20th century. In his book *New Zealand Green*, Redmer Yska notes that cannabis was prescribed by some doctors for migraine and hypertensive headaches, although "users were mainly in the Auckland district, whereas the Wellington and South Island areas had seldom heard of such prescriptions".

In 1955, in response to a World Health Organization request, New Zealand agreed to end medical cannabis imports.

While a dwindling group of elderly Chinese opium smokers occasionally made the headlines, the use of psychoactive drugs apart from alcohol and tobacco was largely invisible to the wider public from the mid-50s. Which didn't mean it didn't happen.

The 50s dancehall and rock 'n' roll scene in Auckland and Wellington was fuelled by prescription amphetamines, and while the pubs would continue to

close at 6pm until 1967, clubs like The Top 20 in Auckland opened six nights a week in 1962 and rocked until 2am at the weekends. Legendary singer Max Merritt recently explained to the Audioculture website how he and his band managed the hours virtually without breaks – whisky and speed: "Man, by 2am we were bouncing off the walls!"

Marijuana – mostly brought in on merchant ships from the early 1950s, but some of it grown unrecognised in suburban back yards – was more the thing of jazz and literary cliques in Auckland and Wellington. Again, it was largely invisible to the wider public – until Auckland 'it girl' Anna Hoffman was charged in 1959 with supplying cannabis to an undercover policeman ("I had no idea it was illegal," she said many years later in the documentary *High Times: The New Zealand Drug Experience*). She was sentenced to six months' jail, and the city was scandalised.

Things were beginning to change, permanently.

The house at 115 Bassett Road, Remuera, was the creation of New Zealand's liquor laws: an illicit 'beerhouse' where people could keep drinking after the pubs closed at six o'clock. It was a criminal offence to run such a place, so criminals did the job, sometimes facilitating the supply of other drugs and sexual services into the bargain. The beerhouses were tacitly tolerated until, in December 1963, the proprietors of the Bassett Road



Tents at Nambassa festival, Golden Valley, near Waihi, 1979



beerhouse, Kevin Speight and George Walker, were found shot full of bullets from machine guns.

If the shootings were the result of competition for the supply of one drug, alcohol – the killers, Ronald Jorgensen and John Gillies, came from a rival beerhouse in Ponsonby – they would also become associated with another, marijuana, when it emerged that Gillies had smoked a “reefer” before setting off to do the job.

The Police publicly took the view that marijuana created homicidal urges. Officer Bob Walton was dispatched in 1964 to learn more from his American contemporaries and, on his return, established New Zealand’s first drug squads and helped draft the extraordinary Narcotics Act 1965, which reversed the onus of proof in drug cases and set a penalty of 14 years’ imprisonment for possession of more than an ounce of pot. (“At the time, the Act was seen as draconian in relation to the problem,” noted the official Police tribute to Walton on his death in 2008.)

If the new Police teams and harsh law were meant to cut off the drug problem before it grew, they failed. In 1967, 10 New Zealand pharmacies and five doctors’ surgeries were burgled in search of drugs. The following year, the Police recorded 118 burglaries or thefts from pharmacies and 37 from surgeries. Between 1966 and 1970, the number of people aged under 25 charged with drug offences jumped from 14 to more than 200.

What the flurry of enforcement couldn’t do was change demographic reality. The post-war cohort of Baby-Boomers was reshaping society. The more the news media reported in a shocked voice that this or that overseas pop-culture hero was associated with marijuana or LSD, the more they established to the Boomers that drugs were indeed part of popular culture.

LSD appeared locally around 1967, and New Zealand’s per-capita use of the drug was said to be the highest in the world during the two decades that followed. In the same year, in the first issue of Chris Wheeler’s scabrous pamphlet *Cock*, Dr Erich Geiringer was the first New Zealander to advance the argument that marijuana’s criminal status was in fact more socially harmful than the drug itself.

Ironically, “The Man” became a significant source of drugs for the counterculture. In 1967, 13kg of marijuana was seized in a bust at the headquarters of the US Operation Deep Freeze base at Christchurch Airport. Twenty years later,

“...little, if any, chance of halting, let alone reversing, the steady escalation in the misuse of drugs...”

THE BLAKE-PALMER  
COMMITTEE REPORT, 1973

some of those who protested the visits of American nuclear vessels in Auckland would ruefully acknowledge to each other that they were marching to end their own source of high-quality LSD, which was believed to come in on those same ships.

But just as many drugs were simply walked through airport arrival halls, in the days before sophisticated screening. In 1975, when Marty Johnstone bought a boat called *The Brigadoon* and had it pick up 450,000 “Buddha sticks” in Thailand, importation hit a grand scale. The Thai cannabis brought in by Johnstone and Terry Clark, in what became known as the “Mr Asia” syndicate, first wrecked the market for the less-potent local pot, then set a new market standard for “New Zealand Green” to reach.

But the greater impact came when Mr Asia turned to a more profitable product: heroin. While punk rock in Britain was largely fuelled by the same drug that had given the mod and northern soul movements their energy – speed – New Zealand’s nascent punk scene went with what was at hand, which, thanks to Johnstone and Clark, was heroin.

The drug took its toll at the time, but its real impact arguably lies in the “silent epidemic” of hepatitis C, which continues to echo decades later. It’s also a grim lesson in the failure of harm reduction.

New Zealand IV drug users could not buy syringes from pharmacies, there would be no safe-use education until the 1990s and needle exchange programmes were decades away. Around 50,000 New Zealanders are thought now to be infected, and three-quarters of them are undiagnosed.

The lack of harm-reduction strategies was not for want of official advice. The Blake-Palmer Committee report in 1973 declared there was “little, if any, chance of halting, let alone reversing, the steady escalation in the misuse of drugs” unless New Zealand was prepared to commit to treatment and education. The report formed the basis of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 and in particular the Act’s introduction of three schedules based on the harm attributed to particular drugs, finally separating cannabis from heroin in the eyes of the law.

The extraordinary scale of the Mr Asia organisation meant that it touched the lives of many New Zealanders who went on to become ostensibly respectable citizens – and that it left a significant vacuum when the enterprise was eventually taken down with the arrest of Clark for Johnstone’s murder in 1979.

That vacuum quickly saw the reappearance of the same DIY approach to drug manufacture that we saw during the decades of the harshest regulation of alcohol supply. But while it was (unusually, in world terms) never illegal to privately distil or brew liquor in New Zealand, the practice of converting pharmaceutical painkillers into monoacetylmorphine in makeshift home labs was always illicit. That did not stop so-called “homebake heroin” becoming a characteristic (and unique) feature of New Zealand drug culture.

Enforcement also took its toll on the Police, especially after the Police undercover programme was launched in 1974. Bruce Ansley’s 1995 book *Stoned on Duty* told the story of former undercover policeman Peter Williamson’s descent into addiction and repeated perjury, and the 2008 Gibson Group documentary *Undercover: The Thin Blue Lie*, recalled many more.

Marijuana, meanwhile, become less a feature of any subculture than part of the national culture itself. Bob Marley’s visit in 1979 manifested the fairly loose

## \* INFORMATION



# Our drug laws over time

## 1 Poisons Administration Prevention Act 1866

The first attempt to control the sale of readily available drugs such as laudanum and opium required only that the identity of the purchaser be recorded.

## 2 Sale of Poisons Act 1871

The first attempt to restrict the sellers of drugs to those on a register of licensed dealers.

## 3 Customs Law Consolidation Act 1882

Confined the importation of opium to larger vessels at specified ports.

## 4 Opium Prohibition Act 1901

New Zealand’s first anti-drug statute targeted Chinese immigrants. It banned the smoking of opium and its importation for smoking and was amended in 1910 to specifically ban any Chinese person from buying opium without a prescription.

## 5 Quackery Prevention Act 1908

The first consumer protection legislation around drug sales.

## 6 Dangerous Drugs Act 1927

Made it an offence to import, produce or deal in a range of drugs, most of which remained available on prescription.

## 7 Poisons Act 1934

Defined certain drugs, such as barbiturates, as “prescription poisons” available only on prescription.

## 8 Narcotics Act 1964

Ratified New Zealand’s commitment to the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Covered more than 100 substances, from LSD to opium and cannabis. For the first time, the law made a meaningful distinction between possession and “dealing” and defined quantities at which dealing was presumed. Reversed the onus of proof, provided for warrantless searches and, as Ray Henwood put it in his 1971 book *A Turned On World: Drug Use in New Zealand*, smacked of “using a cannon to kill flies”.

## 9 Misuse of Drugs Act 1975

Serially amended since but still the applicable law, the MODA introduced the three schedules A, B and C based on the assessed harm caused by individual drugs and, inline with the recommendations of the Blake-Palmer report, set much lower maximum penalties for personal use or possession. Notable amendments include those in 1988 and 1996, which made the law automatically apply to drug analogues (substances that have a substantially similar chemical structure to that of a controlled drug).

## 10 The Psychoactive Substances Act 2013

A work in progress.

*Methamphetamine began to be smoked from the late 1990s.*



interpretation of Rastafarian culture that had been embraced by young Māori and Pasifika New Zealanders, and everyone knew why the pioneering Pacific reggae group Herbs had adopted their name. In 1981, the protagonists in Geoff Murphy's film *Goodbye Pork Pie* smoked and enjoyed marijuana furnished by Bruno Lawrence's philosophising drug dealer. Hardly anyone was scandalised.

In 1990, the University of Auckland's Alcohol and Public Health Research Unit surveyed 5,000 people in Auckland and the Bay of Plenty and found that 43 percent of people questioned had tried marijuana at some point. A follow-up survey in 1998 found that number had increased to 52 percent.

But even in the second survey, 73 percent of respondents said they thought regularly smoking marijuana posed a "great risk" of harm. And some communities, especially Māori in the regions, had discovered the downside of living and raising children in an environment where cannabis was both a profitable crop and a fact of life. In both of the Alcohol and Public Health Research Unit surveys, there was greater concern about alcohol as a "community problem" than cannabis, but concern about marijuana had grown by 1998 – and was strongest amongst under 25-year-olds. Generation X had become more wary of cannabis than its Baby Boomer parents.

In 1986, a few New Zealanders returning from Sydney brought back news

of something called "designer drugs" and possibly even the drugs themselves. In general, the term referred to one drug: MDMA, or ecstasy, which would, in the next few years, become tightly tied to a powerful popular culture movement: modern dance music, via the acid house craze that exploded in Britain in 1988.

When the first house parties came to New Zealand in early 1989, MDMA was already there waiting for them. It was also the favoured drug for a subsequent wave of young New Zealanders who had made their way home from Europe, some through the party scenes of reinvented hippie havens like Goa.

The downers sought out by the users of the 1970s had no place in the new scene, which wanted drugs that let you stay up all night – or even all weekend. A growing subculture developed almost unnoticed by the mainstream media – until Ngaire O'Neill died after taking ecstasy in October 1998.

The 27-year-old Aucklander's death was not down to taking ecstasy per se but a result of "dry drowning" – she drank herself to death with water. This was a point lost on most of the media and, indeed, on Auckland coroner Mate Frankovich, who declared that she was drinking so much water because the ecstasy had diluted the salt in her blood.

A full-blown moral panic sprang up. The following year was election year, and Prime Minister Jenny Shipley promised to reclassify MDMA, on the basis of a single

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“The downers sought out by the users of the 1970s had no place in the new scene, which wanted drugs that let you stay up all night – or even all weekend.”

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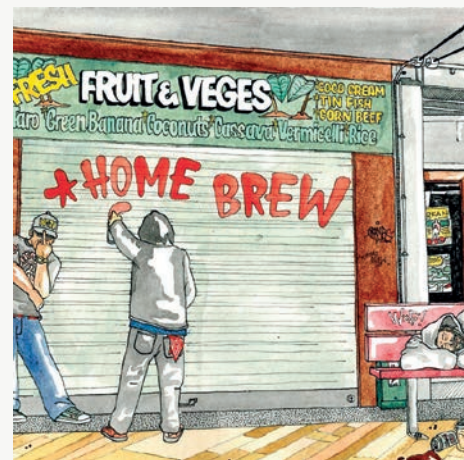
death, from Class B to Class A, placing it alongside heroin. (Shipley lost the election, but MDMA was eventually moved from Class B1 to B2.)

The media hysteria was boosted further in March 1999 when a young surfer called Jamie Langridge died at a dance party on Pakatoa Island. An autopsy showed Langridge had used not only ecstasy but large quantities of alcohol and speed and had sustained a head injury when he slipped and fell on concrete. But when Police photographed 500 strung-out partygoers as they arrived back from the island the next morning, something else was evident: these people weren't all kids and ratbags. The party crowd included many professionals and even lawyers.

While all this was going on, something much more troubling was happening. According to the 2005 documentary *High Times: The New Zealand Drug Experience*, "a prominent Auckland businessman" met with gang representatives in late 1999 to discuss rebooting the market in methamphetamine, which had been present in New Zealand since the 1970s. It was to be presented not as a cut-down powder to be insufflated (snorted) but as a crystal to be smoked: in other words, as P.

This means of administration was well known in other countries but new to the local dance party crowds (again, including many professionals) where its use began. Meth was initially received as a classier, and more benign, version of speed, but its impact on the most vulnerable users was

## \* CULTURE



## Popular culture: New Zealand songs About drugs

### 'Gracious Lady (Alice Dee)', Lew Pryme

When Pryme's 1968 tribute to acid sparked controversy, the clean-cut popstar had to pretend he'd actually tried LSD, in Australia. He hadn't: the song was by Bryce Peterson, who very much had. This caused some embarrassment for the NZBC, which had already approved and played the song under the strict standards of the time and had to publicly de-approve it.

### 'Drugs', Blerta

Bruno Lawrence sang it in character as a drug dealer in the 'Country Girl' episode of Blerta's NZBC TV series in the early 70s. Still hard to believe it went to air.

### 'Blue Lady', Hello Sailor

The "blue lady" lauded in Graham Brazier's song was not a woman, but a special blue glass syringe of German origin.

### 'Mauveen', Tommy Adderley

Recorded by Adderley in 1982 while he was on home leave from a prison term for selling heroin to an undercover cop. He called it 'Morphine Blues', but his label, Ripper Records, lost its nerve and put it out as 'Mauveen'.

### 'Anything Could Happen', The Clean

A song about trying to get drugs from a GP and receiving a lecture instead. Remarkably, it was later adopted by the Labour Party as its theme song for the 2005 election campaign.

### 'Looking for the Sun', Children's Hour

The forerunners of the Headless Chickens recorded this ferocious account of life in a druggy Grafton flat in 1983.

### 'Marijuana', MC OJ and Rhythm Slave

The popular 1990s rap duo's song is a whimsical account of smoking dope – and sharing it with a policeman – one day in Ponsonby. Possibly fictional.

### 'P', Deja Voodoo

At the peak of a wave of national alarm about the methamphetamine epidemic came Deja Voodoo with their song about how P wasn't really so bad. Of the nine Deja Voodoo videos that received an NZ On Air grant, this was not one.

### 'I've Smoked Too Much', Lawrence Arabia

Less a tune than a compact song-cycle, James Milne's epic pop composition shifts through states of marijuana being: contentment, introspection, malaise, love and existential dread.

### 'Datura/White Flowers', Home Brew

A whacked-out tribute to backyard jimsonweed over a lazy soul groove.

## ★ NEWSGRABS



Ellis, a popular TV figure, swiftly pleaded guilty, was fined \$300 plus costs for possessing five ecstasy tablets and resigned from the board of his Charlie's juice company.

# Scandalous!

## Larry Morris

In 1971, Morris had left the band he founded, Larry's Rebels, for a solo career and regular appearances on the TV pop show *C'Mon*. It all came crashing down when the cleaning lady at a Palmerston North motel found some crumbs of pot and called the Police, who pulled over the band's tour van and threatened to arrest the entire entourage until Morris took responsibility. The legal penalty was modest: a \$60 fine for possession, but Prime Minister Rob Muldoon instructed the NZBC to cease playing Morris's records, ban him from television and destroy any existing film of him. Morris continued to make music, but his pop career was destroyed. The following year, he was sentenced to six and a half years in prison for possessing LSD for supply, serving four.

## Les Gray

In 1984, at a meeting of the Dargaville PTA, Department of Education psychologist Les Gray challenged then-Education minister Merv Wellington over his prohibition of sex and drug education in schools. Senior policemen told the media they were considering prosecuting Gray, who had admitted using cannabis. But it would be five years later, when Gray was asked to appear on the *Holmes* show, that the hammer came down. Gray was asked, "Have you used

marijuana?" and replied "Yes, thank you Paul, I enjoy it." A Whangarei police sergeant secured a warrant, searched Gray's houseboat, found 90 grams of marijuana and arrested him. After a District Court judge refused to convict Gray, reasoning that the public good was served by Gray speaking honestly and openly, the Police took the case to the Court of Appeal, which sent the case back to the same District Court judge, who reluctantly fined Gray \$100. Gray refused to pay the fine, which was eventually cleared by an anonymous supporter.

## Marc Ellis et al

The social media age had well and truly arrived in August 2005 when it was reported that two celebrities, both former sports stars, had been caught up in a "white-collar drug bust". Interim name suppression did nothing to prevent a wired nation igniting with online gossip. The celebrities were former All Black Marc Ellis and league international Brent Todd. Ellis, a popular TV figure, swiftly pleaded guilty, was fined \$300 plus costs for possessing five ecstasy tablets and resigned from the board of his Charlie's juice company. In November of the same year, he was named the country's most popular male TV personality in a public vote. His request of a dealer as to whether the pills were "smooth on the comedown" entered the local drug culture lexicon.

ruinous. By the mid-2000s, middle-class drug users were beginning to shun P as both dangerous and distasteful, but its use had spread to the young, working class and brown.

As if the genuine problems associated with the meth epidemic weren't enough, the news media inevitably invented a few more. In 2006, TVNZ's *20/20* programme staked out small-time pot dealers in Auckland's Grey Lynn Park and speculated, baselessly, that marijuana was being laced with P.

The fact that methamphetamine could be synthesised with extraordinary yields from pseudoephedrine, then a common constituent of pharmacy cold medications, meant it was profitable and plentiful. And, of course, it fit neatly into the national tradition of home drug manufacture.

The cycles of public panic were familiar, but they were becoming tighter and more urgent. There was another flurry around GHB, a drug with significant potential for accidental overdose, which had entered dance party circles as Fantasy or "liquid ecstasy" in the late 90s. In 2001, 22-year-old Shawn Brenner died of an overdose of the GHB precursor GBL, which was being sold in branded packets as One4B. In 2002, Wellington Hospital emergency staff reported handling 20 acute overdose cases of GHB in the past year. Both GHB and GBL were subsequently added to Schedule B of the Misuse of Drugs Act.

While all this was going on, Aucklander Matt Bowden was at work on changing everything. In 1997, Bowden, then selling advertising for *Performance Car* magazine, was approached by a client with a business proposition based around a legal stimulant – a substitute for street methamphetamine. An early attempt to market a product via outlets such as the Hemp Store foundered inside six months when it was found to contain ephedrine, a controlled drug.

Bowden decamped to Australia, where he tried again. Working with a neuropharmacologist, he discovered that a substance called BZP had been shown to have amphetamine-like effects in trials in the 1970s. After a failed approach to the Australian Government to endorse BZP as a legal amphetamine replacement, he returned to New Zealand in 2000 and began marketing Nemesis, the first BZP-based party pill.

Bowden has always insisted his principal goal was to provide a less harmful alternative to methamphetamine,





“ Last year’s report *Recent Trends in Illegal Drug Use in New Zealand, 2006–2011* found all the major illicit drugs still in use and noted the emergence of new drugs such as “synthetic LSD” (relatively risky drugs in the NBOMe class) and trends in the abuse of prescribed drugs, especially oxycodone and Ritalin. ”

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- 5 Tents at a Nambassa festival, Golden Valley,  
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“ Bowden has always insisted his principal goal was to provide a less harmful alternative to methamphetamine, to which he had once himself been addicted. ”

to which he had once himself been addicted. And there may well be some truth in the idea that party pills provided a way off P for some users who were unwilling to give up the late-night lifestyle that had become a feature of young life in the cities. But it went much, much further than that.

Pills containing BZP (often in combination with another piperazine or TFMPP) were initially only available via outlets like The Hemp Store, but they gradually entered the mainstream, entirely unregulated. Bowden seemed to have achieved the regulatory solution he sought when a 2005 amendment to the Misuse of Drugs Act created the restricted substances category, or Class D.

This gave authorities the power to set restrictions on age and place of sale – restrictions that were not put in place, thanks largely to a clash with the provisions of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. It would not be the last time an official inability to execute on new approaches would have consequences.

Although they were increasingly shunned by experienced drug users who disliked the vile hangover they could produce, the use of “party pills” rapidly became mainstream, as suppliers flooded the market with unregulated products. New Zealanders’ long-held tendency to binge came into play – both with respect to the pills themselves and in conjunction with alcohol.

Although there were no party pill deaths, their use kept hospital emergency departments busy enough that it was no surprise when the Expert Advisory Committee on Drugs recommended a ban on BZP and TFMPP, which was enacted the following year.

By this time, the next problem was already brewing: synthetic cannabinoids. These marijuana substitutes (some of them manufactured by Bowden) were set to be the first real test of the Psychoactive

Substances Act, a world-leading attempt to regulate new psychoactive substances rather than simply banning them. The Act’s failure of that first test is too recent to traverse in a history like this, but it centred on flawed official execution, a dramatic media panic and, probably, the unsuitability of most synthetic cannabinoids for regulated sale.

While the screws continue to tighten on one of the original coloniser drugs – tobacco – and some moves have been made to haul back the 1980s liberalisation of alcohol, which remains our most harmful psychoactive drug, we’re still a hot mess around the others.

Last year’s report *Recent Trends in Illegal Drug Use in New Zealand, 2006–2011* found all the major illicit drugs still in use and noted the emergence of new drugs such as “synthetic LSD” (relatively risky drugs in the NBOMe class) and trends in the abuse of prescribed drugs, especially oxycodone and Ritalin. Pills allegedly containing ecstasy (but often something else, thanks to a global crackdown on MDMA precursors) remain a staple of summer festivals and dance parties, and marijuana is no less common.

A reboot of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 is due next year, on the heels of a ministerial dismissal of the Law Commission’s review of the Act (which is described as “inconsistent with the official drug policy adopted in New Zealand”) and amid substantial confusion as to the way forward. The Act remains arbitrarily separated from the Psychoactive Substances Act, which will at some point be tested again when the first new products are submitted for approval.

So that’s where we are in 2014. As we have done for 200 years, New Zealanders still like to get high. And we still don’t really know what to do about that. ■

Russell Brown blogs at [publicaddress.net](http://publicaddress.net).



# Shulgin was known to many as the “Godfather of ecstasy”

Alexander “Sasha” Shulgin was born on 17 June 1925 and died, aged 88, at home in California on 2 June 2014. As he died, the sounds of his grandchildren’s laughter rang through the house and combined with the chants of the ancient Buddhist Heart Mantra, which hails the dying’s departing soul. You could do worse.



MIKE  
POWER

S

hulgin was known to many as the “Godfather of ecstasy”, famed for resurrecting the long-forgotten recipe for 3,4-methylenedioxy-N-

methyldamphetamine, MDMA or simply ‘ecstasy’ from the archives of German pharmaceutical firm Merck in the 1960s.

Shulgin’s destiny, and that of this drug, are intertwined in the most implausible of ways. MDMA was originally designed by Merck in 1912 in a bid to produce a blood-clotting agent. However, Shulgin created a new and easier synthesis and inadvertently triggered the dance-drug culture that endures to this day, with tonnes of the drug consumed worldwide.

He was tipped off to the drug’s extraordinary qualities, its ability to inspire empathy and self-analysis, by a student in the late 1960s. He made and took the drug for the first time in 1978 and was awestruck by its qualities. The drug spread, like vast ripples on an infinite pond, from these experimental psychotherapeutic circles to the dance floors and music festivals of the world.

He was one of the 20th century’s foremost scientists, a brilliant and fearless pioneer who synthesised, self-tested and recorded the effects of hundreds of new psychedelic drugs. He published his work in two books, *PIHKAL*, a chemical love story and *TIHKAL*, the continuation, which detail the synthesis of hundreds of tryptamines and phenethylamines and remain classics of clandestine chemistry.

“I am completely convinced that there is a wealth of information built into us, with miles of intuitive knowledge tucked away in the genetic material of every one of our cells,” he wrote. “The psychedelic drugs allow exploration of this interior world and insights into its nature.”

He was a mass of entirely logical contradictions. Here was a renegade chemist who worked for the DEA. He was an expert witness in drugs cases who could be found in the late 1990s lecturing on the finer points of phenethylamine synthesis in the shade of Mayan pyramids, joking that the CIA was watching. In later years, he would walk around at Las Vegas’s anarchic annual Burning Man festival, his face a knot of confusion and delight.

In 1978, he met his wife Ann, who was born in Wellington, New Zealand. They married in 1981. She used his creations in

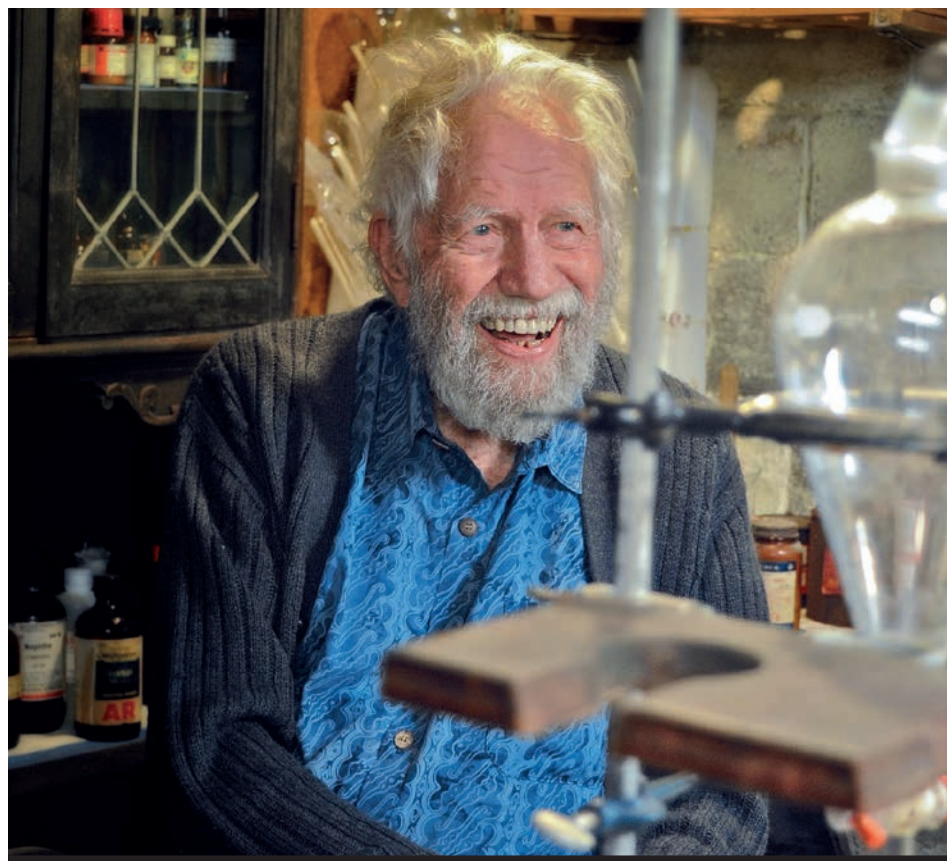
her therapeutic practice, and together, they were a charming, eccentric couple, bonded by love and respect for each other’s chosen disciplines. Friends describe their partnership as a perfect union, and their warmth and generosity to researchers, journalists and the merely curious was legendary.

Dr Dave Nichols, a renowned biochemist who published several key papers with Shulgin, spoke about one of his more memorable visits to the Shulgin family home.

“[It] was some time after the Rubik’s cube craze hit. Sasha had worked out a clever, non-fail formula to solve it.

“We had dinner and had been chatting for some hours, and we had been drinking red wine. He brought out the Rubik’s cube and began to describe and show me his system for solving it.

“I rarely drink alcohol and had probably had at least four or five glasses in me. Even so, Sasha described with great patience, how to solve the cube, and even wrote out instructions for me using red and blue coloured pencils. After several false starts, I finally went through it, with his tutelage, and solved the cube. Somewhere, lost and buried in my reams of stacked papers, is a small notepaper with red and



blue lines on it illustrating the stepwise process for solving Rubik's cube that Sasha had solved!"

Shulgin described himself as a toolmaker, and the job he set out to do was to give people access to unexplored corners of their own minds.

"Our generation is the first, ever, to have made the search for self-awareness a crime, if it is done with the use of plants or chemical compounds as the means of opening the psychic doors," he wrote in *PIHKAL*. "But the urge to become aware is always present, and it increases in intensity as one grows older."

Shulgin was born in Berkeley, California, in 1925 to a Russian-emigrant father who became a schoolteacher. He studied organic chemistry at Harvard but dropped out in 1943 to join the US Navy. Arguably, the most influential drug experience of his life happened during this period. It was a few small grains of powder given to him by a nurse.

While at sea, he suffered a serious thumb infection that required surgery. Handed a glass of juice by a nurse, he spotted some undissolved solids at the bottom of the glass, assumed it was a sedative and fell unconscious. It was actually sugar; the placebo effect had

knocked him clean out. This was his first consideration of the interface between mind and body and drugs that would come to shape his life.

On leaving the Navy, Shulgin returned to California where he earned a PhD in biochemistry. He then worked at the University of California before working at Bio-Rad labs and later at Dow Chemicals. There, he invented a new pesticide that was so profitable for the firm he was given free rein in its labs.

Fascinated by his experiences in the late 1950s with mescaline, he began to produce variants – new psychedelic drugs – in Dow's labs. He left the firm in 1965 and built his home laboratory, an alchemist's lair with a Rachmaninov soundtrack. Here, he was free to pursue his interests as he saw fit, helped along by a DEA licence to produce illegal drugs, granted in exchange for his help as an expert witness in trials.

Shulgin created many hundreds of drugs and then tested them at home with friends, recording the experiences meticulously. He was anything but a hedonist, even though the substances he made elicited joy in millions.

Matthew Collin, the journalist and historian whose book *Altered State*

“He was one of the 20th century's foremost scientists, a brilliant and fearless pioneer who synthesised, self-tested and recorded the effects of hundreds of new psychedelic drugs.”

remains the definitive record of the emergence of MDMA as a world-conquering compound, says Shulgin's legacy must be viewed in context.

"Shulgin had a massive impact on popular culture, but it's unclear how much he really understood it. He envisaged his beloved 'materials' being taken in benign, controlled settings, which are a long way from the average rave full of wilful hedonists looking for the next buzz."

Shulgin's career spanned the 1960s' psychedelic explosion right through the rebirth of MDMA, and his legacy can be seen in the modern-day emergence of novel psychoactive substances – drugs that skirt national and international laws through deliberate molecular manipulation.

He was the counterculture's *eminence grise*, a figurehead for a generation who rejected the irrationality of drug prohibition and a scientist who hit the bullseye of targets others didn't even know existed. He never made a penny from his creations, while many have retired early on the illicit profits made thanks to his work.

Shulgin had a stroke in 2010 and was supported in his later years by the generosity of hundreds of well-wishers.

His first marriage, to Nina Shulgin, ended when she died in 1977. Their son, Theodore Shulgin, died in 2011. He is survived by Ann and four stepchildren.

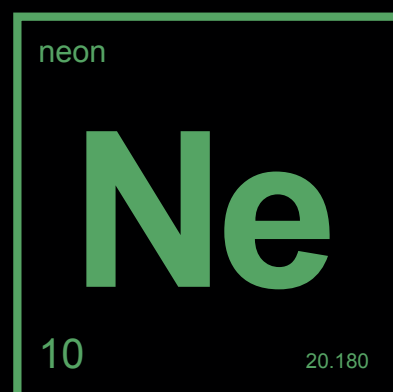
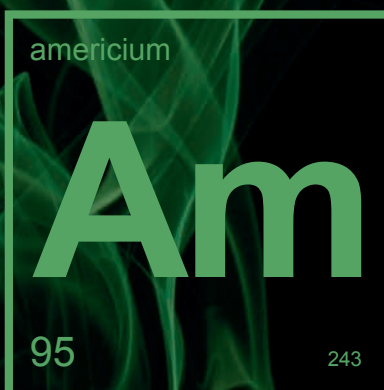
As he died, these words were chanted at his bedside.

Gate, gate  
Gone, gone  
Para gate  
Gone beyond  
Parasamgate  
Gone way beyond  
Bodhi Svaha!  
Hail the goer! ■

Mike Power is a UK-based writer and author of *Drugs 2.0: The web revolution that's changing the way the world gets high*.



# meth phetami



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Amphetamine, meth's parent drug, was first synthesised in Berlin in 1887 by Romanian chemist Lazâr Edeleanu, but its potency as a central nervous system stimulant wasn't really discovered until 1927.

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# 0.1<sup>GRAM</sup>

ONE 'POINT'  
OR HIT OF METH



# \$700<sup>NZD</sup>

THE AVERAGE COST FOR A GRAM  
OF METH, ALTHOUGH THIS CAN  
RISE TO OVER \$1,000



# 2,717

THE NUMBER OF METH-RELATED  
OFFENCES RECORDED IN 2013  
IN NEW ZEALAND



# 0.9%

PROPORTION OF ADULTS IN  
NEW ZEALAND IN 2013 WHO  
HAD TRIED METH

It was first used as a medicine – an inhaled decongestant – in 1934. However, in 1919, Japanese scientists had synthesised methamphetamine (meth) from amphetamine. They discovered meth was more potent and processed more quickly by the body. It was easier to make too.

During World War II, small doses of meth were used by both sides to keep soldiers awake. High doses were also given to Japanese Kamikaze pilots before their suicide missions. Since the war, meth has been used as a diet aid, an anti-depressant, a stimulant for students and athletes and to treat ADHD. Its stimulant properties mean meth is often used recreationally, but as its addictive properties became more widely known, its recreational use has been banned in most countries. Meth has been placed in schedule II of the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances treaty. New Zealand is a signatory to international drug conventions so recreational meth use is illegal here under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Also known as crystal, speed, ice, glass or P, meth can be manufactured, or “cooked”, in a number of ways. This means the drug can come in a range of forms and colours.

The most common form is an odourless crystalline white powder. It is usually smoked but can also be snorted, injected or taken in pill form.

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse in the United States, some common short-term side effects of meth use include mind and mood changes such as anxiety, euphoria and depression. Long-term effects can include chronic fatigue, paranoid or delusional thinking and permanent psychological damage. A meth overdose can cause heart failure, and some of the long-term physical effects such as liver, kidney and lung damage may also kill you.

One suggested reason meth is so addictive is that it causes the brain to release extraordinary amounts of dopamine, leading to extreme feelings of pleasure and motivation. Meanwhile, it slowly kills off the brain's dopamine receptors, making it harder and harder for a prolonged user to feel the pleasant effects of a dopamine-flooded brain. The user can then enter a downward spiral of needing to get high again and again to feel that pleasure, all the while doing their body and brain more and more damage. And some research suggests damage done to the brain may be permanent.

Drug-review website Erowid.org is a forum where drug users can describe their experiences, and

reports on meth use vary widely. Some users say it made them terrified and paranoid. Others plead with readers never to even try meth. One user says his first hit nearly drove him to suicide.

However, one user said his first “bump” of meth was underwhelming and even boring. Another said she takes meth on the weekends to help her paint and has never had a problem with addiction or her health. Yet one more said it was like having all the blocks in your consciousness removed. “Nothing impairs.”

While user experiences may differ, society generally takes a dim view of meth. Meth users are commonly portrayed in popular culture as aggressive and paranoid and with toothless smiles, uncontrollable twitches and faces riddled with sores.

However, the Open Society Foundations' 2014 paper *Methamphetamine: Fact vs. fiction and lessons from the crack hysteria*, suggests many of the immediate and long-term harmful effects of methamphetamine have been greatly exaggerated. It also asserts the uninformed stigma placed on meth users is a considerable barrier in reaching them for treatment.

It's commonly accepted that low doses of methamphetamine improved wartime pilot performance, and some recent research also reveals meth

might have a positive experience on the body. In November 2011, scientists from Columbia University published a study that suggested meth could actually improve some brain functions, such as attention span, memory and learning.

In New Zealand, meth use is falling. The latest *Tackling Methamphetamine: Indicators and Progress Report (April 2014)* indicates use in New Zealand has more than halved over the past three years. The price of a gram here, currently around \$700, is slowly rising too, probably because there's less meth on the market.

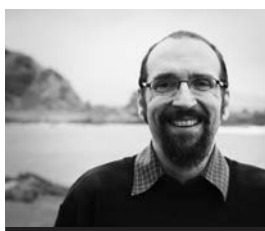
The report says 0.9 percent of New Zealand adults have tried meth, which is higher than the average recorded by the United Nations of 0.7 percent. This country's demographic with the highest rate was 16–24-year-old age group, where 2 percent had tried meth.

Fifteen percent of frequent meth users in New Zealand reported they were in treatment, and there have been 5,400 or more meth-related calls to the Alcohol and Drug Helpline since November 2009.

The *New York Times* once referred to meth's effects as a “forest fire of damage”. Open Society Foundations would say that's an exaggeration. As with so many other things, the truth is probably somewhere in the middle. ■

# Doing LAPs

With few Local Alcohol Plans (LAPs) in place, communities are forced into being reactive when faced with new applications for liquor licences. **Rob Zorn** looks at what the slow arrival of LAPs means in Mangere, and nationwide.



**ROB ZORN**



The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 came into force in December 2013 as the culmination of the Law Commission's many recommendations to government around alcohol law reform. Part of its purpose was to restore to communities some control over where, when and how alcohol is sold in their neighbourhoods.

Why is it then, that in June 2014, a new liquor licence was granted to a store directly across the road from Southern Cross Campus, a 1,500-pupil school in Māngere – despite what appeared to be considerable opposition from the local community?

An objection was lodged by the Mangere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board and the licence was opposed by Auckland Regional Public Health, the local licensing inspector and, not surprisingly, Southern Cross Campus itself.

Southern Cross Chair Peter Parussini says the decision to grant the licence beggars belief.

"We have a deliberate strategy to improve academic performance, and we're really proud of what we have achieved. A big part of that has been teaching our pupils they have a role as leaders in the

community and that they need to keep themselves safe in terms of drugs and alcohol. Setting up a liquor store right outside our front gate completely undermines that."

In granting the licence, the District Licensing Committee (DLC) has made some concessions to the school. No alcohol can be sold between the hours of 3pm and 4pm, no deliveries may be received during that time, single-item sales are forbidden and no person in school uniform can be on the premises, regardless of their age.

Mangere East Family Service Centre CEO Peter Sykes, who appeared at the hearing as a witness for the local board, says it's ridiculous to think school pupils are only vulnerable between 3pm and 4pm.

"Students go over the road at lunchtime to buy food, and any slightly clever young person wanting to buy alcohol, can easily disguise a school uniform. This is a shop that's open and selling alcohol and many students have to walk right past it on their way to or from school."

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams agrees.

"The new legislation was supposed to face us in a new direction, away from the liberal one and towards something much more community focused. Clearly that hasn't been realised yet.

"With the new Act in place, allowing consideration of local amenity and good

*A new liquor licence was granted for an outlet opposite Southern Cross School*



“The new legislation was supposed to face us in a new direction, away from the liberal one and towards something much more community-focused. Clearly that hasn’t been realised yet.”

REBECCA WILLIAMS

order, I would have thought the DLC would have more considered the community’s concerns.”

While many may find the DLC’s decision astonishing, there are some factors that make this case a little less clear cut than it would seem.

The store in question, a superette, had already been selling beer and wine for quite some time. The application was for a new full off licence to sell the complete range of alcohol (including RTDs and spirits) from an outlet above the store, and the proprietor was happy to forego the superette licence if the new off licence was granted. He agreed there would be no advertising other than the store’s Thirsty Liquor branding and argued a more supervised upstairs location would actually make alcohol less accessible to young people.

The Police agreed and did not oppose the licence application.

“Our job is to oppose licences if the applicant is deemed unsuitable or if there is a clear connection between the outlet and recognised hotspots of harm,” says Sergeant Matt Tierney of the Counties Manukau Police District Licensing Unit.

“None of that applied here, so we had no objection. It’s up to councils to oppose around grounds involving sensitive sites and that sort of thing. We try not to cross into each other’s areas so there aren’t multiple objections all about the same thing.

“The other thing to remember is that there are significant differences around a grocery store selling beer and wine and a full off licence. There were a whole bunch of conditions imposed, and the view of the Police was that this would reduce harm by making alcohol less accessible for children.”

Sykes disagrees.

“There’s actually a lot of harm associated with this store. There are three youth gang houses within a few hundred metres of it. There was a stabbing right outside where the door to the upstairs outlet will be, and it’s a notorious place for youth gang activity historically.”

Parussini says the school has had no end of trouble associated with nearby alcohol sales.



“A big part of that has been teaching our pupils they have a role as leaders in the community and that they need to keep themselves safe in terms of drugs and alcohol. Setting up a liquor store right outside our front gate completely undermines that.”

PETER PARUSSINI





“These industry delaying tactics amount to an undermining of community decision making using legal argy-bargy in the courts. It’s costing local government and denying communities the right to have their say.”

REBECCA WILLIAMS

“We’ve had instances of people walking through the grounds during school hours carrying boxes of beer. There’s plenty of evidence of people drinking on the grounds at night or during the weekends; bottles lying around, vandalism and stuff.”

“We have sports during the weekend and after-school homework or catch-up classes, and we have people walking past with alcohol. It’s not conducive to academic performance, and how anyone could think it’s a good idea to let this application go ahead is completely beyond me.”

At the hearing, much was made of the fact that Southern Cross Campus did not lodge an objection when the application was first announced. This was seen to weaken their opposition.

“It’s true we didn’t object,” says Parussini, “but that’s because the notice informing the community about the application was issued at the back of a newspaper in January when the school was closed and people were on holiday. We simply didn’t know about it.”

“If I were cynical, I’d suspect this was deliberately done to sneak it through under the radar. But why should we have had to find out and object in the first place? I would have thought, given the theme of the current legislation, that they should have had to come to us directly to ask for approval.”

Williams says the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 is all about reducing or minimising harm, and that requires things to change rather than to leave them as they are.

“Here we had an opportunity to improve the situation and move towards the spirit of the new legislation, and it’s an opportunity that’s simply gone begging.”

However, she does concede that an important mechanism in the Act for giving communities more say lies in the development of Local Alcohol Plans (LAPs), and herein lies the rub. Auckland hasn’t yet got an LAP in place. This means the new Act had little impact on what actually happened.

While the Act stipulates broad level criteria such as default trading hours, it has empowered local councils to determine exactly what happens in their communities via LAPs. These can stipulate different opening hours and impose more specific restrictions (or not) according to what a council might think is appropriate in a given area.

Auckland Council has completed a draft LAP, and Williams says there’s

“So far there are around 30 draft LAPs in existence around the country, but only one council has managed full implementation.”

a chance the licence would not have been granted had the LAP been in place.

“The draft LAP contains a concept called a ‘presumption against’, which is applied in some areas. It means the default position is that new licences will not be granted unless applicants can prove a new outlet will not contribute to alcohol harm. Also, because this is a sensitive location or ‘neighbourhood centre’, an environmental and cumulative impact assessment would have been required. This would have ensured the school was informed and involved from the get-go.”

LAPs are also likely to reduce harm in other ways, such as providing clarity to both the industry and law enforcement in how to deal with alcohol harms.

“Exactly how much help the LAP will be for officers on the front line is hard to say until we see it in its final form,” says Tierney, “but we’re already seeing benefits from the default trading hours in the Act.”

“We’ve seen a huge reduction in disorderly behaviour in the central city between the hours of 6am and 8am, which is really good. So, if we use that as an example of how well thought out legislation can affect things, then yeah, further improvements are likely.”

So why doesn’t Auckland have an LAP in place?

In a way it’s an unfair question. So far, there are around 30 draft LAPs in existence around the country, but only one council has managed full implementation.

Belinda Hansen, Principal Policy Analyst at Auckland Council, says a number of factors influenced the timeframes for the development of its LAP.

“Around 40 percent of the nation’s alcohol licences are in Auckland, so it’s important to get it right. We spent 18 months consulting with a range of stakeholders including Police, the industry, health and social agencies and the wider community to inform the draft LAP.”

“We have a bustling CBD and big areas like Ponsonby, so we needed to consider what was going to be right and to work for so many different outlets in so many different circumstances in terms of opening hours and specific conditions.”

Written submissions on the draft LAP closed in July, and public discussion will take place during September. It is expected a provisional LAP will be accepted by Auckland Council in November, at which stage, it will become subject to appeal. Full adoption is not expected until early 2015, after appeals have been considered.

Williams thinks any hope of full adoption by early 2015 is probably unrealistic.

“So far, three LAPs have made it to provisional status (Waimakariri, Wellington and Tasman-Marlborough). All three have been subject to multiple appeals, mostly by organisations like Hospitality New Zealand, Independent Liquor and the big supermarket chains like Progressive and Foodstuffs.

“So what we’re seeing here is the alcohol industry using its commercial muscle to hold things up as much as it can to maintain the status quo by delaying the implementation of LAPs for as long as it can. Because of the size of the city, Auckland Council received 2,600 or more submissions on its draft LAP. It’s likely the Auckland LAP will also be heavily appealed.”

The Alcohol Regulatory and Licensing Authority (ARLA) has decided it will deal with appeals one at a time, so Williams is probably right that the process could take some time.

She says many of the appeals have been around the meaning of the word “reasonable” even though, in many cases, the issue is just a single extra hour of opening time. One supermarket is even appealing over hours in which it doesn’t currently operate.

“The argument is that they may not currently operate at that time, but they want to reserve the right to in the future. The reason they don’t operate during the disputed hours is because it’s clear the community doesn’t need them to, so this looks to me like an appeal for appeal’s sake.”

Meanwhile, she says, the very fact that there have been so many appeals may well be causing delays in other localities.

“The feedback Alcohol Healthwatch is receiving is that a lot of councils have put their LAPs on hold until they see the results of the appeals in places that have already gone provisional.

“Basically, these industry delaying tactics amount to an undermining of community decision making using legal argy-bargy in the courts. It’s costing local government (i.e. ratepayers) and denying

communities the right to have their say through their LAPs. When you sit back and look at it, these appeals are pathetic and vexatious.”

While we might expect someone like Williams to be reluctant to give Big Alcohol a break, there is certainly evidence of some dubious practices on the part of the industry in terms of the submission process.

For example, in April, it was revealed only about a third of the 260 submissions presented by Hospitality New Zealand to the Hastings and Napier District Council’s draft LAPs could be considered genuine. The remainder were found to be from addresses that couldn’t be verified or from people who, when contacted, said they didn’t recall making a submission.

One ‘submitter’ even said they’d signed a filled-out submission form at a Havelock North bar in exchange for a free jug. That person has since withdrawn their ‘submission’.

Sykes says those opposed felt quite belittled by the lawyer for the applicant at the Mangere hearing and he was amazed at what he calls the games played with words.

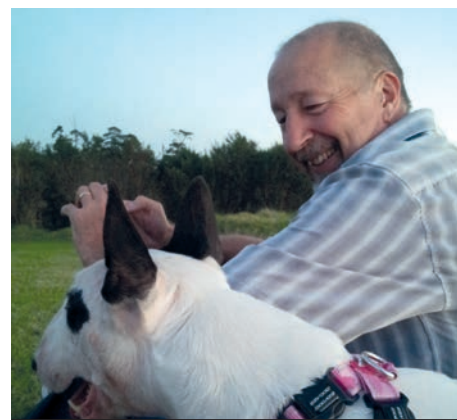
“Basically we were made to feel that because we didn’t know in time to lodge an objection, we didn’t exist and had no right to a say in the matter. It was suggested that, because we hadn’t objected, our opposition at the hearing was some sort of ambush.

“It was even argued that, because alcohol is already available in supermarkets, society accepts that it should be available in generic places. A child could see the difference between selling alcohol at a supermarket and selling it at a store across the road from a school. It was ridiculous.”

As Williams points out, district licensing committees and alcohol authorities are courts of law, and it’s really hard for ordinary members of communities to gear up and take on lawyers – which is why local boards have been so willing to get involved.

“We need to get LAPs in place quickly so ordinary mums and dads won’t be forced to take this sort of action to protect their children in future.

“In the meantime, and at the very least, the DLC has imposed some conditions on the new licence. Time will tell whether they are sufficient. The Police say there are no trouble hotspots associated with the store. It will be interesting to see whether that changes.” ■



“Basically, we were made to feel that, because we didn’t know in time to lodge an objection, we didn’t exist and had no right to a say in the matter.” ■

PETER SYKES

Rob Zorn is a Wellington-based writer.

# Face trashed

Alcohol marketing on social media is cheap, successful and legal. But researchers say New Zealand should be attempting to control marketers' sophisticated digital strategies to build brand loyalty with young Kiwis.

**Keri Welham** reports.



KERI  
WELHAM



There are more than 1 billion people on gargantuan social media network Facebook.

It can serve as a social organiser, a way to quickly

share family photos, an address book, a device to track down old mates and – crucially for young people – an opportunity to create and refine an online persona.

When young people 'like' their favourite fashion designer, coffee house, musician or sports team, it clarifies their desired social standing. They know their friends will see content posted by the brands they've liked. Glassons or Karen Walker? The Eagles or Paloma Faith? Badminton or cage fighting? Southern Comfort or Tutankhamun Ale?

An enthusiasm towards drinking can be communicated by liking alcohol-related pages or brands. Teens and young adults will be among the 5.2 million people who like a Facebook page called Beer, the 5.3 million who like the 'hobby' drinking or the 51,000 who like the 'sport' drinking.

In December last year, Facebook announced it had 1.23 billion monthly active users. The other big players at this stage are Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp and, for the oldies, Pinterest and LinkedIn. The sites most commonly linked to alcohol marketing are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

In an unprecedented move, Finland will introduce alcohol advertising reforms from 2015 that are aimed at limiting social media marketing.

But New Zealand beer brands have had considerable success with social media marketing in recent months – with campaigns such as Tui's Catch a Million – and advertising bodies would strongly oppose similar moves here.

Steinlager's #AllBlackSnap was digital marketing gold for the beer brand. A columnist on marketing publication StopPress suggested it was "either a slightly duplicitous or very clever way of getting the people to post 'ads' for Steinlager of their own volition".

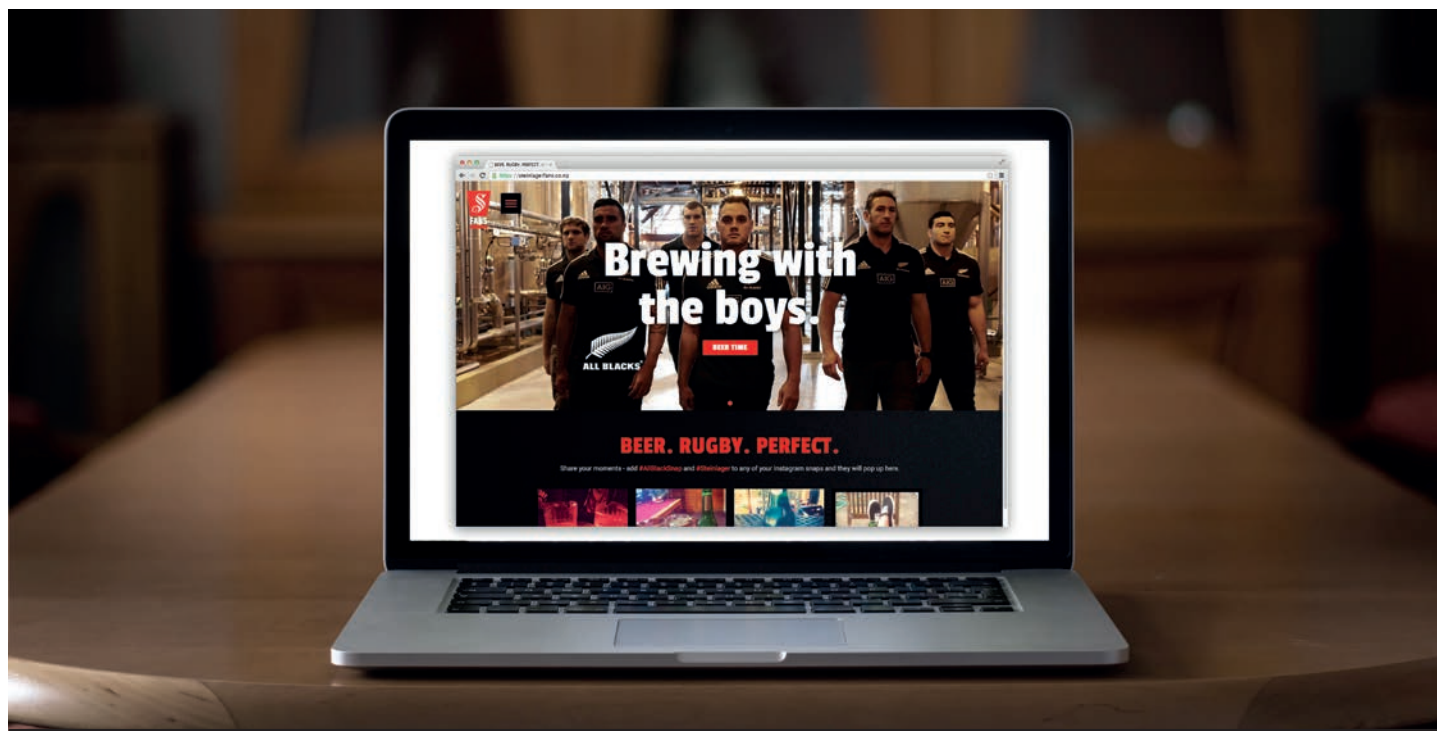
StopPress explains that the Steinlager campaign was launched for the first 2014 All Black test against England at Eden Park on 7 June. Rugby fans were invited to post pictures of themselves at the ground with a numbered Steinlager bottle (one for each member of the team) and the hashtag #AllBlackSnap. When Aaron Cruden scored the first goal wearing the number 10 jersey, prizes were immediately delivered to some of those who had posted images of themselves with number 10 bottles.

StopPress says the campaign generated a combined social reach of more than 350,000 from a total of 1,300 entries on social media sites Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Some of this consumer-generated content was then loaded onto the site steinlagerfans.co.nz, under the headline: BEER. RUGBY. PERFECT.

So, what?

“Is there anything wrong with a Kiwi sports fan who enthusiastically uploads pictures of themselves with sponsor's product in the hope of winning merchandise?”





Is there anything wrong with a Kiwi sports fan who enthusiastically uploads pictures of themselves with sponsor's product in the hope of winning merchandise?

What about a New Zealander of legal drinking age who willingly shares a viral video or photo created by an alcohol marketer?

Or a pic, uploaded to a beer brand's Facebook page, of an infant with an empty beer bottle?

Massey University Associate Professor of Psychology Antonia Lyons studies New Zealand's culture of intoxication.

"Research has shown that [alcohol marketing] is very harmful," she says. "It reinforces a drinking culture."

Last year, Lyons led research into drinking cultures and digital technologies. A report, titled *Flaunting it on Facebook: Young adults, drinking cultures and the cult of celebrity*, was released in March this year. It covers surveys of 141 young adults, analysis of 487 examples of online marketing and a walk-through of 23 individual Facebook users' pages.

The report says young New Zealanders are obsessed with identity, image and celebrity.

"Being visible online was crucial for many young adults, and they put significant amounts of time and energy into updating and maintaining Facebook pages, particularly with material regarding drinking practices and events," says the report.

"Alcohol companies employed social media to market their products to young people in sophisticated ways that meant the campaigns and actions were rarely perceived as marketing. Online alcohol marketing initiatives were actively appropriated by young people and reproduced within their Facebook pages to present tastes and preferences, facilitate social interaction, construct identities and more generally develop cultural capital."

Lyons says researchers were shocked by the volume of alcohol marketing in social media.

"You see the desire to get intoxicated become normalised."

This is evident on pages like *Getting Drunk!*, which has almost 700,000 likes and is updated with new alcohol-related jokes at least once a week.

No single company stands to gain from a page like *Getting Drunk!*

But sophisticated brands pour significant budgets into digital marketing in an attempt to garner followings comparable in size to those on the joke sites. They post well devised videos with excellent filming and make it easy for consumers to share the videos with their online friends.

For brands, viral posts lend a valuable impression of personal endorsement to advertising material. And in terms of the bottom line, marketing becomes extremely cost-effective when consumers themselves take care of message dissemination.

Research by Dr Nicholas Carah at the Australian Foundation for Alcohol

## New Zealand Code for Advertising and Promotion of Alcohol

There are four principles in the code. The first three deal with advertising.

### Principle 1

- Alcohol advertising and promotions shall observe a high standard of social responsibility.

### Principle 2

- Alcohol advertising and promotions shall be consistent with the need for responsibility and moderation in alcohol consumption.

### Principle 3

- Alcohol advertising and promotions shall be directed at adult audiences. Alcohol advertising and promotions shall not be directed at minors nor have strong or evident appeal to minors in particular. This applies to both content and placement.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) says: "This code is designed to ensure that alcohol advertising and promotion is consistent with the need for responsibility and moderation in merchandising and consumption, and does not encourage consumption by minors. Particular care is also required in the advertising and promotion of products likely to have strong appeal to young adults over the legal purchase age."

Source: ASA.co.nz

“All children and adolescents have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and, to the extent possible, from the promotion of alcoholic beverages.”

Source: World Health Organization, European Charter on Alcohol (1995)

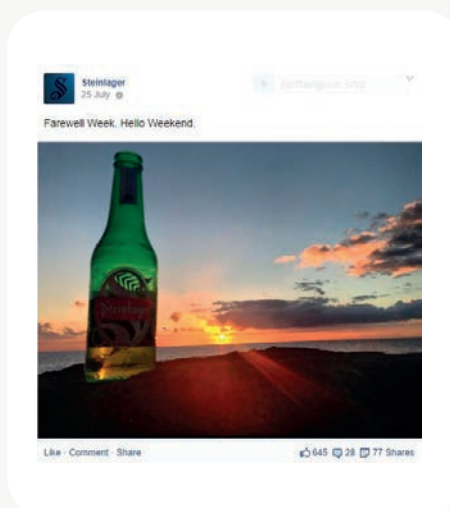
“Brands engage with consumers’ routine conversations about everyday life. The more embedded in everyday life alcohol consumption is, the more valuable alcohol brands are because they become increasingly impervious to regulation”

DR NICHOLAS CARAH

SOCIAL MEDIA

Steinlager Facebook page | July 25

‘Farewell week.  
Hello weekend.’



Shared **77 TIMES** Likes **645**

Facebook page | August 1

Getting Drunk!



Shared **152 TIMES** Likes **761**

Beer Barrel Facebook page | July 17

‘Toga Party’



Young people use Facebook to organise their social lives, so pubs such as Dunedin’s Beer Barrel use the social media to ensure they have a chance of featuring in those plans.



Research and Education (FARE) shows Australia's top 20 alcohol brands posted more than 4,500 items of digital marketing content on Facebook in 2012.

"Brands continuously seek engagement from fans in the form of likes, comments and shares. They ask questions, host competitions and post memes and videos to spark engagement and conversation. As brands do this, they rely on fans to use their own identities and peer networks to circulate brand messages."

The research, released in May this year, shows brands are most likely to post social media content between 3–5pm on a Friday and will often reference end-of-the-week drinking rituals.

"Brands engage with consumers' routine conversations about everyday life. The more embedded in everyday life alcohol consumption is, the more valuable alcohol brands are because they become increasingly impervious to regulation," Carah writes.

Researchers from the University of Western Sydney's School of Business studied six months of alcohol promotion on Twitter. They looked at the seven most valuable global alcohol brands and found, although each company's Twitter following was modest (Heineken had 58,777 while pop star Lady Gaga has 42 million), their posts were often retweeted to a much larger secondary audience, which could include those under 18.

Lyons says those in her study drank to feel alcohol's effects.

"People enjoy the buzz. It's a positive experience a lot of the time," she says.

"But it turns very quickly into a negative impact."

She says social media offers an "airbrushed" drinking culture. It's glam, funny, fun.

People seldom post about getting their stomach pumped or ending up in hospital after a fight, and posts about alcohol-fuelled domestic violence are rare.

Lyons, Carah and other researchers say alcohol companies' use of social media to create brand value has become a matter of public concern and debate.

But how, in practice, do you stop a runaway train of this magnitude?

Lindsay Mouat is Chief Executive of the Association of New Zealand Advertisers (ANZA). He says advertising portrays responsible drinking.

Advertisers are required to present drinking as an adult activity, enjoyed in moderation. The point of advertising is not to increase the volume of alcohol sold in

New Zealand, he says, but for the brand in question to increase market share.

ANZA administers a service called the Liquor Advertising Pre-vetting System (LAPS – not to be confused with Local Alcohol Policies, which use the same acronym).

The LAPS, set up in 1998, offers advertisers an educated, external opinion on whether the campaign they are planning is likely to fall outside the Advertising Codes of Practice.

It is free to lay a complaint with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), of which Mouat is currently chair. A separate self-regulatory body called the Advertising Standards Complaints Board considers the complaints. It is made up of five public representatives with no connection to media or advertising groups and four ASA-nominated people with media and/or advertising backgrounds.

Since online records began in 2007, there have been 45 complaints to the New Zealand ASA regarding Facebook – nine of those involving alcohol companies or drinking establishments.

An explanation of the process on the ASA website illustrates the limited power at ASA's disposal: "In the event of a complaint being upheld the advertiser, agency, and media are requested to withdraw the advertisement. These requests are invariably complied with."

Mouat says complaints that are upheld bring "shame" on the advertiser in question.

On average, it takes the ASA 15 days to issue a decision. Antonia Lyons says this is an eternity in social media terms, where videos go viral in hours. Lindsay Mouat says 15 days is a fast turnaround for any adjudication process.

Mouat says, in recent years, there has been a marked reduction in the number of complaints about alcohol advertising to the ASA. He says it is assumed there are fewer complaints because advertisers are working within the guidelines.

In 2012, New Zealand passed section 237 of the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012. It implemented the first stage of the New Zealand Law Commission's recommendations for alcohol law reform. This year, a Ministerial Forum on Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship received submissions about advertising and promotion of alcohol. Submissions closed on 28 April.

In total, 177 submitters supported further alcohol advertising restrictions, while 64 submitters favoured the status

## QUOTES OF SUBSTANCE

“This forms a picture of an employer that is not observing the statutory requirements which apply to all employers in New Zealand.”

Employment Relations Authority member Rachel Larmer politely describes an employer who thought it would be okay to pay a worker with beers instead of proper wages.

“If we want to get this right we are going to have to do it slowly.”

President **Jose Mujica** of Uruguay – the first country to legalise growing, selling and consuming cannabis – realises that, even though it's the government producing the pot, the gangs and thugs will still want to get involved.

“But it is long past time to repeal this version of Prohibition.”

A landmark *New York Times* editorial weighs up the science and concludes it's time to repeal 40 years of cannabis prohibition in the US.

“It doesn't seem to serve anyone well to attach criminal penalties to people who have addiction disorders, particularly pregnant women.”

**Michael Botticelli**, Acting Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, criticises a new Tennessee law and suggests that what a woman with an addiction and a baby on the way just needs is a criminal conviction to make her life complete.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook page

# The Bank Bar & Brasserie



Likes  
**6,316**

Drinking establishments, such as The Bank Bar & Brasserie in Hamilton use their Facebook pages to build a sense of community. This page, which is uploaded with pictures of people at the bar most weekends, has been liked 6,316 times. In 13,582 instances, users have told their Facebook friends that they are (or were) at the bar and linked that status update to the bar's official page.

quo. Not all submitters commented on both advertising and sponsorship.).

A summary of submissions states: "Generally, submitters categorised as health, professional associations, community/cultural groups, researchers, and individuals were more likely to support the implementation of further restrictions. Specific groups more likely to support the status quo (and no further restrictions) were sporting bodies, advertising/media submitters, retailers, alcohol industry and trade associations."

The Health Ministry outlined three constraints that prevented consideration of further measures to address alcohol advertising and sponsorship. One factor was economic and community consequences as a result of lost sponsorship. Another was the difficulty of assessing the evidence base. The third factor was changing technology.

"It was noted that regulating alcohol advertising is difficult and its effect is uncertain, particularly because alcohol advertising is a rapidly growing area with new technologies and marketing techniques providing new opportunities to influence purchase and consumption behaviour. Restrictions, may, therefore, be easily circumvented."

Antonia Lyons says: "So it's too hard so we won't bother? I mean, that's a real cop-out. You could at least stand up and do something."

In February this year, Finland introduced proposed amendments to alcohol advertising legislation. One of the new laws, due to take effect in 2015, is a ban on alcohol-branded social media communication.

Ismo Tuominen works on drafting the amendments. In a YouTube presentation, Tuominen says, in practice, the amendments will rule out any promotion involving a game, lottery or contest; advertiser use of any content produced by consumers; and production of viral marketing videos that are intended to be shared on social media.

In other words, various elements of the #AllBlackSnap promotion would be illegal in Finland.

The amendments don't ban alcohol-related posts on a consumer's own website, social media page or emails, as these are not considered advertising.

Tuominen says he would have preferred more extreme regulations, banning everything except product information, but the political environment dictated that Finland should focus on banning the most harmful practices.

"Of course, the worst option, for any government, is just to sit back and watch these new forms of advertising," Tuominen says.

Lindsay Mouat of ANZA says there is "complete stupidity" in what the Finns have done. "It will have very limited impact."

What the legislation won't stop, Mouat says, is young people taking photos of themselves drunk and posting them on their own social media accounts. Advertising-generated content would make up an "extremely small" part of a young adult's newsfeed, as opposed to their friends' posts about drinking.

"It's not the advertising. It's what their peers are doing."

He says New Zealand's legislative reform, similar to that in Finland, would "achieve absolutely nothing".

"It's just not going to help," he says. "The media is changing so fast."

Mouat points to France, where the Loi Evin alcohol policy law was introduced in 1991 to control advertising for alcohol. Mouat says analysis found it was "ineffective" in reducing high-risk drinking patterns.

However, alcohol prevention researchers said the legislation had brought about a distinct change in advertising. The Association Nationale de Prévention en Alcoologie et Addictologie (ANPAA) wrote that the success of complaints against advertisers, drawing on the strength of the law, had alarmed alcohol producers, advertisers and the media.

"As a consequence, since 1991, we can observe a real change in alcohol advertising: the law has modified the language of advertising, losing most of its seductive character. It is no longer allowed to use drinkers and drinking atmospheres: we have observed the disappearance of the drinker from the images and the highlighting of the product itself."

A recent research letter in the *Medical Journal of Australia* referred to the success of banning tobacco promotion in 168 countries through the 2003 World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

"That framework's trajectory suggests research, public pressure, political will and international co-operation are needed to reduce widespread alcohol promotion and the associated public health costs."

Antonia Lyons says tobacco promotion reform was more straightforward because one cigarette is harmful, whereas one drink can have benefits. But she doesn't believe that's justification to avoid the issue of alcohol promotion on social media.

She would love to see social media companies like Facebook ban alcohol companies from advertising. But she's pessimistic.

"It's not going to happen."

Lyons says Facebook makes too much advertising money from beverage giants like Diageo – makers of Johnnie Walker, Smirnoff, Guinness – to consider cutting off that income stream. (Diageo and Facebook signed a "multi-million dollar strategic partnership", in September 2011, which aimed to "drive unprecedented levels of interaction and joint business planning and experimentation between the two companies." Diageo reported that the partnership had led to a "20 percent increase in sales as a result of Facebook activity".)

Lyons says a more realistic option is to make alcohol marketing transparent – so companies are forced to tell consumers they are watching/reading a paid advertisement. This might erode some of the social value for young people sharing advertiser-generated content. Lyons says the self-regulation model would need to be abandoned if demands and limitations on the industry were ever to be effectively enforced.

Lastly, Lyons would like to see advertisers forced to disclose what information they gather about consumers when their page is liked and how that information could be used to target drinkers.

"I can't see that happening in New Zealand because the government hasn't done very much about traditional alcohol marketing."

She says any reform needs to be trans-national to be effective. Social media is global, so the solutions to a specific social media concern must be global too.

Lyons says New Zealand is at "the very liberal end" of the alcohol regulation spectrum.

"We've normalised it so much that it's part of everyday life. We can buy it at the supermarket. [But] it's actually a drug and it's a special commodity. It's actually something quite unique." ■

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Keri Welham is a Tauranga-based writer.

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## A sample of Advertising Standards Authority Complaints Board decisions



### September 2013

A complaint was considered regarding an advertisement for Carl's Jr's Jim Beam Bourbon Burger on the Carl's Jr Facebook page. The complainant was concerned by one of the images in the advertisement – a picture of the burger accompanied by the words: "It'll make a man out of you."

The ASA Complaints Board did not uphold the complaint. Its decision reads: "The majority of the Complaints Board said the tagline 'It'll make a man out of you' did not suggest that consuming alcohol would make a consumer more manly, rather it said it was a reference to the size of the burger i.e. a 'man's sized burger'."

### August 2013

A complaint was laid regarding two images on the Facebook page for Thirsty Liquor. The first was a sleeping cat sprawled beside two empty beer cans. The other was an infant with a surprised look on its face. The caption read: "How much did I drink last night?" The complainant said the images were irresponsible and inappropriate.

The complaint was upheld. The ASA Complaints Board wrote: "...both images encouraged the idea that excessive consumption of alcohol was amusing and comical and, therefore, were in breach of both Principles 1 and 2 of the Code for Advertising and Promotion of Alcohol."

The advertiser had already removed the images when the complaint was considered.



### June 2011

A complaint was considered regarding a Facebook website advertisement for DB Breweries Limited. One photograph in the ad was of a man wakeboarding and holding a bottle of DB Export Beer, another was of a young man (easily identifiable as younger than 25) drinking a bottle of DB Export Beer and another was a photograph of a young baby holding a bottle of DB Export Beer in its mouth and sitting on an adult's knee.

DB told the ASA: "The Facebook website images which are the subject of this complaint are user-generated and uploaded, and were not created by DB or by one of our agencies."

It described a "stringent review process" for user-generated content.

"Regrettably these images got through the process undetected. Upon being made aware of the error, we immediately took steps to remove the relevant material."

The chairman at the time decided the matter was settled by the self-regulatory action of withdrawing the images, so it was not referred to the Complaints Board.

# Towards global drug policy pathways that work

Ahead of the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Drugs in 2016, the Global Commission on Drugs proposes a new drug control regime for the 21st century. The experience of what regulation means in practice is informing policy, as **Steve Rolles** explains



STEVE ROLLES



On 9 September, the Global Commission on Drugs released its latest report *Taking Control: Pathways to drug policies that work* in New York. The

Commission is made up of political leaders including seven former presidents, UN luminaries, including former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and high-profile public figures, including businessman Richard Branson and Paul Volker, former head of US Federal Reserve.

The Commission had a huge impact in 2011 with its first report, *War on Drugs*. This report represented the most highly powered group thus far to argue for a substantive re-orientation of drug policy from the failings of a punitive enforcement-based paradigm to a health and human rights-based approach. Most prominent were the calls for decriminalisation of drug users and experimentation with legalisation and regulation of some drugs. The second and third reports focused on the impacts of the war on drugs on the epidemics of HIV and hepatitis C.

The new report returns to and develops the themes of the first, but notably with a new emphasis on the questions of regulation and UN-level reforms (see box). The

accelerating pace of drug policy reform since 2011 is acknowledged. This is occurring in spheres of both decriminalisation and harm reduction and with the first cannabis regulation models being implemented in the US and Uruguay. As the regulation debate moves from theory to reality, a substantial section of the report focuses on providing more detail about what regulation means in practice – attempting to address many of the popular concerns and misconceptions.

New Zealand's groundbreaking 2013 legislation to regulate certain novel psychoactive substances is presented as part of this global drug policy reform process. For anyone in New Zealand doubtful of the law's significance, the 2013 Act is used as one of the examples of innovative new thinking on regulation models around the world. The approach has clearly informed the recommendations which specifically encourage "diverse experiments in legally regulating markets in currently illicit drugs, beginning with but not limited to cannabis, coca leaf and certain novel psychoactive substances".

Whilst the Commission's recommendations are familiar territory for reform NGOs, the greatest political significance of the report perhaps lies in the Commissioners themselves. The 2011 report helped create political space for

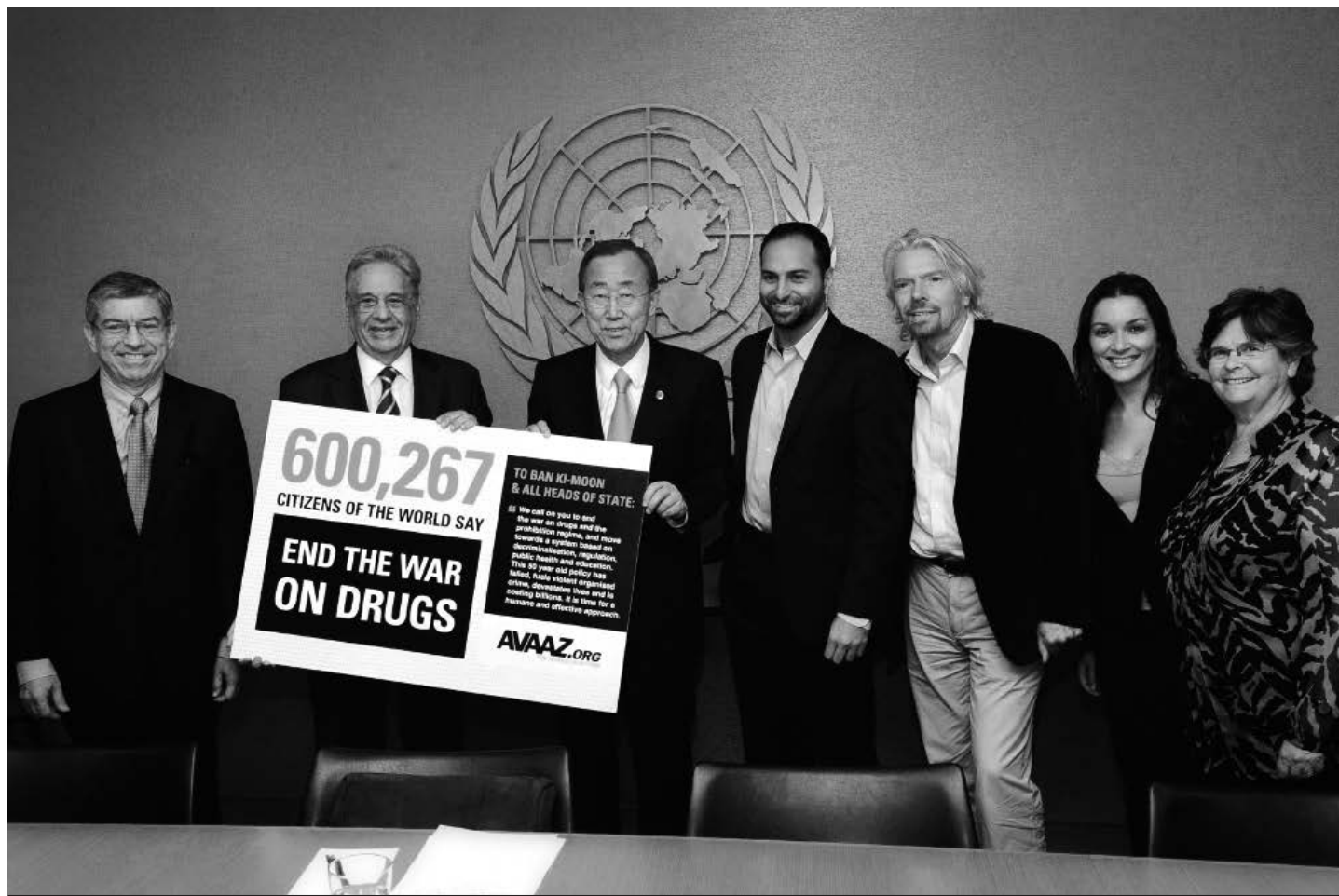
increasingly high-profile public figures, including – for the first time – sitting heads of state, to openly question the War on Drugs and call for meaningful exploration of alternative approaches. It helped 'break the taboo' on high-level drug policy reform debate as it set out to do.

The most significant manifestation of this new openness was the call in September 2012 from the presidents of Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala at the UN for a Special Session of the General Assembly (UNGASS) to review and reform the global drug control framework. The 2016 UNGASS that resulted is another key focus of the new report. Recommendations are clearly designed to inform the UNGASS deliberations, with a key final section on what UN-level reform entails. It suggests not only that the punitive paradigm underlying the UN drug treaties needs to be reconsidered, but ultimately that the drug treaty system itself needs to be revisited and modernised to make it 'fit for purpose'. ■

Steve Rolles is Senior Policy Analyst for Transform Drug Policy Foundation [www.tdpf.org.uk](http://www.tdpf.org.uk) and was one of three technical coordinators involved in researching and drafting the new Global Commission report.



Members of the Global Commission on Drugs with the 2011 petition to end the War on Drugs.



## The Global Commission report's key recommendations

### PUT PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND SAFETY FIRST

Instead of punitive and harmful prohibition, policies should prioritise the safeguarding of people's health and safety. This means investing in community protection, prevention, harm reduction, and treatment as cornerstones of drug policy.

### ENSURE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AND PAIN CONTROL

The international drug control system is failing to ensure equitable access to essential medicines such as morphine and methadone, leading to unnecessary pain and suffering. The political obstacles that are preventing member states from ensuring an adequate provision of such medicines must be removed.

### END THE CRIMINALISATION AND INCARCERATION OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

Criminalising people for the possession and use of drugs is wasteful and counterproductive. It increases health harms and stigmatises vulnerable populations and contributes to an exploding prison population. Ending criminalisation is a prerequisite of any genuinely health-centred drug policy.

### REFOCUS ENFORCEMENT RESPONSES TO DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ORGANISED CRIME

A more targeted enforcement approach is needed to reduce the harms of the illicit drug markets and ensure peace and security. Governments should deprioritise the pursuit of non-violent and minor participants in the market, instead directing enforcement resources towards the most disruptive and violent elements of the drug trade.

### REGULATE DRUG MARKETS TO PUT GOVERNMENTS IN CONTROL

The regulation of drugs should be pursued because they are risky, not because they are safe. Different models of regulation can be applied for different drugs according to the risks they pose. In this way, regulation can reduce social and health harms and disempower organised crime.

### GLOBAL LEADERSHIP FOR MORE EFFECTIVE AND HUMAN POLICIES

The evolution of an effective, modern international drug control system requires leadership from the UN and national governments, building a new consensus founded on core principles that allows and encourages exploration of alternative approaches to prohibition.



#### RESOURCES

Report digital summary and download  
<http://www.gcdpsummary2014.com>

# Decriminalise cannabis, decriminalise Māori?

That Māori are more often criminalised for cannabis use is often used as another good argument for decriminalisation. But **Hirini Kaa** argues things are more complex and that, as many Māori probably know, decriminalisation won't be the panacea proposed so often by privileged pākehā.



HIRINI  
KAA



K, let's get this out of the way: arresting and convicting people for the possession or use of a small amount of cannabis is stupid, counterproductive,

racist and just doesn't work. There, that was easy, wasn't it?

So obviously, if we decriminalise or even legalise cannabis, we will be a much better society and have healthier, stronger communities and whānau. Right? Not necessarily. The problem is Māori are arrested (and imprisoned) for a whole lot of things, and removing cannabis from the mix won't necessarily help.

Khylee Quince (Associate Dean at the University of Auckland Law School) points out that Māori get arrested disproportionately for all sorts of crime, and that comes from a long and deep problem between Māori and the Police. So Māori get arrested (and imprisoned) disproportionately anyway, whether for drugs, driving, alcohol ... or anything really.

Also, having a 'legal' market won't necessarily help. States in the US that have legalised (and regulated) cannabis are facing a resulting problem. If there is a regulated market that will sell to adults (18+ say), then they will have to price the

product quite high to discourage excessive use and to include the all-important tax revenue. So in Colorado where they are working on this, a 'tinnie' will cost around \$42 including taxes.

In order to make the market work, they will really have to crack down on the 'illegal market', which will mean ... more arrests than ever before until the legal market can become dominant. Of course, if there are kids under the legal age who can get a tinnie for \$20, there will still be demand, and an illegal market will still exist to cater for them.

Cannabis is not that big of a criminal problem for Māori – the legal system is. Only 4 percent of young people who go through the youth courts are there for drug offences – 96 percent of them are there for something else. And of course, rangatahi Māori make up over half of those in front of the youth courts. And there are currently around 200 people in prison because of cannabis offences – out of 10,160 prisoners in total – under 2 percent of total prison inmates. Also, those actually in prison for cannabis alone are often those involved in very large amounts, hundreds or thousands of plants, as opposed to a few for personal use.

It should be noted, though, that 'the system' is not always the baddie. Judge Jane McMeeken from the Christchurch Youth Drug Court is an example of

“ ... so anything that might increase access to the drug – including decriminalisation – I oppose. ”

someone making the system work. Hers is a court for young people who have drug problems and would go through 'the system' anyway. In this special court, they meet once a fortnight with the judge and counsellors and are specially supported by a wrap-around system. Even though this is Christchurch, at present, half of the 14 young people there are Māori.

Judge Jane ('JJ' to the rangatahi in the court) is passionate and harrowing in her tales of some of these young people, and their challenges make you want to cry. For some of them, their proudest achievement is to have a clear urine screen at their next appearance, and being constantly out of it to escape their lives was a common thread. And for some of these rangatahi, being in this court provides more support than they will ever receive from their own whānau – who led them down this path in the first place. So 'the system' is not always the problem.

To be honest, while I understand the arguments of those who advocate for decriminalisation, I don't necessarily empathise with them. Rolling out wave after wave of Pākehā middle-class advocates who are highly functioning smokers is a kind of limited argument. Those people do not face the intense pressure of racism, of poverty, of a justice system – a system full stop – that is set up to oppress them.

You throw these issues on top of cannabis use, and you get a very different picture. Some even argue that cannabis may pacify our communities. While that may be true in relation to the terrible impact of alcohol, what we really want are drug, alcohol, violence and tobacco-free communities.

And yes there are Māori advocates for the drug, but I take my lead from Hone Harawira who simply says it's no good for our people and we don't need it. So anything that might increase access to the drug – including decriminalisation – I oppose.

So back to the beginning. We know arresting Māori in particular for small amounts of weed is not a good idea. But I'm not sure that simply wishing away the problem will make it work – and decriminalising or legalising cannabis will not necessarily fix the bigger problems of institutionalised racism and the breakdown of whānau and community. ■

This opinion piece was first published on the RevTalk blog [www.revtalk.co.nz](http://www.revtalk.co.nz)

**Hirini Kaa, Ngāti Porou/Ngāti Kahungunu, is a historian and Anglican priest working in South Auckland. He tweets as @revhirini.**

## QUOTES OF SUBSTANCE

“And there was total silence. Then a policeman came and said, 'You're right. We have to save them if we can, because my son is a drug user. And I don't know what to do.'”

This comment by Indonesian Health Minister **Nafsiah Mboi** shows how a truth hitting home changed the whole atmosphere of discussion at the recent AIDS conference in Melbourne.

“I was amazed by the number of people who were drunk and the level of alcohol. I was a bit surprised.”

FIFA Secretary General **Jerome Valcke** went to Brazil and was shocked by the booziness of the World Cup.

“Alcoholic drinks are part of the FIFA World Cup, so we're going to have them. Excuse me if I sound a bit arrogant but that's something we won't negotiate.”

FIFA Secretary General **Jerome Valcke** (remember that guy?) bullies the Brazil Government to overturn its ban on alcohol sales at sports events as a condition of hosting the games.

“I hot-boxed the Camry. Yeah, it wasn't so bad.”

Young Nat's President **Sean Topham** talks on Back Benches about the first time he smoked marijuana. We're not sure whether he means the dope or the Camry wasn't so bad.



# So should naloxone become more accessible in New Zealand?

## THE CASE FOR

IT is a life-saving drug that's safe, easy to use and affordable. Naloxone hydrochloride (or the brand name Narcan) is an opioid antidote that can immediately reverse a potentially fatal overdose caused by opioids such as morphine, the powerful prescription painkiller oxycodone and the illicit drug heroin. It's possible that, if given early enough, it could have saved the life of acclaimed American actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, who died of a heroin overdose in February this year.

So it is logical to make naloxone, which can be injected or given as a nasal spray, more widely available in New Zealand so it can be quickly administered in emergency situations where opiate poisoning is suspected. Ambulance paramedics and intensive care paramedics (the more highly trained levels of ambulance staff) already routinely carry the drug and are trained in how and when to inject it into a patient. New Zealand Police are not equipped with naloxone. The argument is that the number of overdoses is too low here to justify the training required for them to be able to administer the drug properly. However, Charles Henderson, national manager of the New Zealand Needle Exchange Programme, warns there are signs that heroin use here is rising and the number of overdoses could rise accordingly.

"Whilst it's rare, we think we're seeing increases, and when we consider some of the reports and Customs data around, we think heroin is on the rise."

In the United States, on average, 110 people die each day from overdoses, and more than half of these fatalities involve opioids such as heroin and prescription painkillers. Heroin overdose deaths increased by a staggering 45 percent between 2006 and 2010. In July, US Attorney-General Eric Holder called for more law enforcement agencies to supply their personnel with naloxone, saying opioid addiction was a public health crisis. In New York City, state funding of US\$1.2 million has been provided for 20,000 officers to begin carrying naloxone kits this year, following similar initiatives

in many other states. The US Food and Drug Administration also fast-tracked approval of a new device called Evzio, which delivers a dose of naloxone through a hand-held injector. When activated, it gives spoken instructions to the user on how to inject the drug in an emergency.

While the number of opioid overdoses in New Zealand is currently low compared to other countries including the United States and Australia, there is a strong case for naloxone to be made more accessible as part of a harm-reduction approach. This might not necessarily be through equipping Police officers and other emergency services staff with naloxone, but instead could be done through community-based programmes. Health clinics could be set up in a working partnership with a needle exchange where GPs could prescribe the drug to those deemed to be at higher risk. Naloxone kits could also be issued to vulnerable groups such as recently released prisoners.

While it's positive that ambulance paramedics carry the overdose antidote, sometimes they might not get to the scene quickly enough to administer naloxone at the optimum time. The other difficulty is that people are sometimes reluctant to call emergency services to report an overdose, because in doing so, they may be putting themselves at risk of facing drugs charges.

If family members or caregivers of an injecting drug user had naloxone close to hand, perhaps in an easy to use form like Evzio, they could use it as a first-aid response to overdose. Opioid poisoning victims quickly lose consciousness, so receiving naloxone immediately rather than waiting for emergency services boosts their chances of survival.

Naloxone, which is on the World Health Organization's Model List of Essential Medicines, is unlikely to cause harm even if given in the wrong circumstances. Making it more readily available to those who might need it – either through the peers of drug users or their family members and caregivers – would save lives.

In the United States opiates cause thousands of overdose deaths each year. Now Police officers and community members are being equipped with an antidote drug called naloxone to combat what has become a public health crisis. Making naloxone more readily available here would widen the safety net for overdose victims, a vital step if we follow international trends towards rising heroin use. Opponents argue broader access to naloxone could give drug users a false sense of security. So should it become more accessible in New Zealand?

**THERE'S** an important difference between New Zealand and other countries such as the United States and Britain where moves are under way to equip Police officers with naloxone. Our rates of opioid overdose are extremely low.

The reason for this is that heroin is now rare in New Zealand and injected drugs are nearly all diverted pharmaceuticals, which means users have a more reliable idea of what dose they are taking. Heroin has a variable strength and purity, which makes it more likely to cause an accidental overdose.

Recently released prisoners who have been drug users are at higher risk of overdose because their tolerance is lower, but Jeremy McMinn, co-chair of the National Organisation of Opioid Providers says, in most cases, Kiwi prisoners are allowed to remain on methadone or other opioid substitutes while they are serving their sentence, which helps protect them after they are released.

While it might seem like a positive step to arm those likely to be on the scene with an antidote to an overdose among one of their peers or a family member, there could be an unintended consequence from widening availability of naloxone; people could become less cautious about their drug use because they know life-saving treatment is close at hand.

"They might think they have this safety net of having naloxone right by them. What's lacking is research to reassure us that emergency kits given to people using opioids actually increase safety across the board. They might, in fact, increase risky use," McMinn says.

Naloxone is carried routinely in ambulances staffed by several hundred paramedics and intensive care paramedics around the country, and St John Medical Director Tony Smith says they would be sent in all cases where opioid overdose was suspected.

"The requirement for naloxone is very low. I don't have any hard data, but opiate poisoning requiring an ambulance is a relatively unusual event. The incidence is so low in New Zealand that we don't think it's worth extending this [naloxone training] beyond the paramedic and intensive care paramedic staff."

Police Association President Greg O'Connor says the heroin scene in New Zealand today is very different now to what it was like in the 1970s when the Mr Asia drug syndicate was active. He remembers once encountering two heroin overdoses in one shift when he was a Police officer back then. The number of overdoses currently did not justify the training and cost required for Police to be equipped with naloxone, and it was not something he would advocate for at this stage.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the cultural similarities between Australia and New Zealand, so far New Zealand has not followed the trend of rising numbers of opioid-related overdoses happening across the Tasman. If the situation changes, perhaps access to naloxone should be reviewed, but at present, the cost and time involved in training and equipping more emergency personnel or setting up healthcare-based community schemes for distributing the drug more widely, are not warranted and could be better spent on more urgent priorities.

## THE CASE AGAINST

### YOUR VOICE

YOU  
DECIDE

What do you think?  
Have your say  
[drugfoundation.org.nz/viewpoints](https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/viewpoints)



## I'm Lotta. I'm an alcoholic.

Lotta Dann, the journalist wife of TVNZ political editor Corin Dann and a mother of three, has outed herself as a recovering alcoholic and released a book, *Mrs D is Going Without*, which has quickly become a bestseller. Dann started writing an anonymous blog about her battle with booze nearly three years ago, and now it receives about 2,500 hits a day.

Dann now reaches an even wider audience as the manager and face of a new website – [www.livingsober.org.nz](http://www.livingsober.org.nz) – developed by the Matua Raki (Addiction Workforce Development), the Health Promotion Agency and the New Zealand Drug Foundation. As well as featuring Dann's blog, the website will offer resources and an interactive online community for people who need support to quit drinking. She spoke to *Matters of Substance* about her transformation from a “boozy housewife” to a model of happy sobriety.

**Q** You have been interviewed on television and in radio interviews since going public and the release of your book. How much impact do you think your story has had?

**A** I'm hoping that the impact has been huge where it counts, which is with the people who are like me, and from what I can tell, it has been, because I've just been inundated with emails and private Facebook messages, and they're all saying, “I'm just like you, it used to be just a glass of wine at night and now it's a bottle, I'm holding down my life, but I'm feeling really guilty.” A lot of them are businesswomen, successful people, who are privately battling this addiction, and they've had no outlet for it, and then I pop up, and they've gone, “Oh my god.”

The night the Sunday interview aired on TV One I had 30,000 hits on my blog, it was unbelievable. I remember the overwhelming feeling I had three years ago was loneliness, and I was married and had a lot of friends, but battling an addiction that isn't visible is a very tricky, internal place to be, so you really do feel quite alone. I wanted to reach out to the people who feel that way too so they know they're not alone.

**Q** How bad did your drinking get, and how was it affecting your family life?

**A** It started to really bed in and become much more habitual when I was at home alone with the kids and dealing with the Groundhog Day aspect of that. I don't think they were suffering from my drinking yet, I got out before I hit a real rock bottom. I would've been a bit vacant and full of wine in the evenings, probably a sore head and dragging my hungover body around during the day. But Corin and I didn't have fights, it wasn't a drama drinking problem, it was just a sad, heavy, sloppy, personal drinking problem.

**Q** How important was it for you to accept the label of being an ‘alcoholic’ with all of the connotations and stigma that comes with that word?

**A** I have sober friends who still haven't accepted that label. But for me, when I had that thought that I was an alcoholic, it was very calming, because it was a complete acceptance of the fact that I can't touch alcohol ever again. It was lovely actually, because it was simpler. It simplified everything, and I realised that the combination of my brain and alcohol doesn't work, I just can't moderate with that drug.

**Q** How important to your recovery was your blog and the online community that developed around it?

**A** My main technique was writing out my thoughts and feelings. You could do that privately, and it would still be effective, but because I did it publicly, through blogging, I was led to my second great sobriety tool – the online recovery community. I didn't go to any counselling or groups.

My advice to other people who want to stop drinking is don't hide from the truth, believe that change is possible, find your like-minded community who can help you and know that you can get to a place where you are free from all the angsting and cravings. It is hard, but you can get to a place where you don't miss it. You have to be very strong and determined for the first six months to a year, but after 12 months, you start feeling much freer. The new Living Sober website is great because we can all climb in there together and help each other.

**Q** Was it a tough decision to publicly admit your drinking problem when your husband has a high-profile career?

**A** I talked to Corin about it, it was a big decision, but he was 100 percent behind me. He would tell you that there was no stopping me, not that he wanted to. He really encouraged me to write my story. We just feel that it's so real and important and it's something that matters. I feel so good being sober that I want other people who feel trapped in a boozy hole to know you can get out of it. You do get a bit evangelical about it I think.

**Q** How good do you feel now, nearly three years into your recovery, and how certain are you that you'll never drink again?

**A** It's so great when you realise fun is fun just if you're having fun, it's not about what you're drinking. I'm figuring out how to deal with the hard things of being a human without pushing them away with alcohol. I love it, it's amazing being open to this whole world of emotional experiences. I used to wake up at 3am and go to the bathroom and I'd feel nauseous and guilty. That 3am guilt has gone. I slept like crap when I was boozing, but I sleep great now. I often wake up and go, “Wow, another night of eight hours sleep!”

I've retrained my brain, I don't need alcohol in my life, and I don't miss it. Even thinking that at my sons' weddings in 20 years or 30 years time I'll be toasting them with a glass of orange juice in my hand doesn't bother me. In fact I'm really happy about that.



## Substance and substantiation

Tobacco plain packaging laws are an experiment that hasn't worked.



**D**ebate over Australia's ground-breaking move to introduce plain packaging is heating up as tobacco companies claim the new law has led to a booming black market for cheap cigarettes instead of stamping out smoking.

Australia became the first country in the world to introduce plain packaging in December 2012. Since then, all legal cigarettes have come in standard dull green packaging with large graphic health warnings, replacing the usual branding. No tobacco industry logos, brand imagery or promotional text are allowed, and the brand and product names are printed in the same small font.

The plain packaging laws are designed to reduce the appeal of tobacco products to young people, boost the impact of health warnings, and curb the power of retail packaging to gloss over harms caused by smoking. Coupled with raising taxes on cigarettes, the Australian Government aims to bring down smoking rates from 16.6 percent in 2007 to less than 10 per cent by 2018.

But big tobacco companies, who have been aggressively campaigning against the plain packaging measures, including lodging legal challenges, claim the new rules have not led to a fall in smoking rates and instead have boosted the illegal tobacco market at the expense of legitimate manufacturers and retailers.

Philip Morris International's website touts research showing Australia's law changes are not working as planned: "Consumers aren't smoking less, they are just buying cheaper alternatives or turning to branded packs available on the black market."

That research is a KPMG LLP report on illicit tobacco in Australia prepared for Imperial Tobacco, British American Tobacco and Philip Morris Ltd and

published in April this year. It says consumption of illegal cigarettes has reached record levels, growing from 11.8 percent in 2012 to 13.9 percent of total consumption in 2013. It estimates the government has lost up to AU\$1.1 billion in potential tax revenue as smokers light up more contraband tobacco. Overall, tobacco consumption actually increased slightly last year, bucking a historic downward trend, the report concludes.

Of course, big tobacco companies have a clear interest in Australia's world-first legislation being seen internationally as a failed experiment. A peer-reviewed academic study by researchers at Cancer Council Victoria, also published in April, came to a very different conclusion, finding no change in the availability of illicit tobacco following the introduction of plain packaging.

Cancer Control Victoria also raises concerns about the methodology of the KPMG report and questions the representativeness of two surveys, the 2013 Roy Morgan Internet survey and the Empty Pack Survey (based on cigarette pack litter collected at particular locations), on which KPMG's findings are based. It says its estimate of the size of the illicit tobacco market is likely to be substantially higher than is warranted and points out that the amount of tobacco intercepted by Customs in 2012–13 was not substantially higher than in previous years.

The other tobacco industry argument is that cigarette sales have increased despite the introduction of plain packaging and graphic health warnings. *The Australian* ran a front page story in June reporting that 59 million more cigarettes were sold in 2013 than the previous year (representing a 0.3 percent increase in sales) and suggesting the new regime may have backfired. The 0.3 percent figure was sourced from a data analysis company commissioned by the tobacco industry.

British American Tobacco Australia spokesperson Scott McIntyre is quoted in *The Australian* saying industry sales

volumes have increased and the number of people quitting has dropped. "From 2008 to 2012, smoking incidence, or the number of people smoking, was declining at an average rate of 3.3 percent a year. Since plain packaging was introduced, that decline rate slowed to 1.4 percent."

But government figures contradict his comments, with federal treasury data showing cigarette sales have fallen by 3.4 percent since the introduction of plain packaging. When adjusted for population growth, the data suggests the number of cigarettes sold per person dropped by about 5 percent last year. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures also show a decline of 0.9 percent in the amount of tobacco sold, making the consumption of tobacco the lowest ever recorded since 1959.

And in a sign that plain packaging is influencing smokers' behaviour, a study by University of Sydney researchers carried out between October 2011 and April 2013 found calls to the stop-smoking Quitline rose by 78 percent following the introduction of the new legislation.

The controversy across the Tasman is particularly relevant to New Zealand. The Government plans to introduce similar plain packaging measures here soon, and the Smoke-free Environments (Tobacco Products and Packaging) Amendment Bill had its first reading in Parliament in February.

Earlier this year, a Philip Morris representative warned a Parliamentary committee that the introduction of plain packaging breached World Trade Organization rules and would affect New Zealand exports of wine and dairy to Indonesia.

The long-term effect of Australia's plain packaging laws on smoking prevalence is still unclear, but official statistics suggest they may already be having a positive effect. Mythbusters thinks tobacco industry claims of a growing black market and rising tobacco consumption are a smokescreen that doesn't stand up to close scrutiny. ■

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