

# matters of substance

AT THE HEART  
OF THE MATTER,  
NZ DRUG  
FOUNDATION.

Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa

Disorder south of the border

What should we make of ibogaine?

The costs of global drug control

'Real world' ecstasy

May 2011

## When the crowd goes wild

Come September and the Rugby World Cup, all eyes will be on New Zealand. Will the focus remain on world-class standards of sporting excellence, or will our drunken crowds put on a show of their own? Some say high ticket prices and our cultural love for the game will ensure we mind our manners, but recent behaviour and controversial alcohol management policies have left some organisers feeling nervous.


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Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa

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The 2011 Rugby World Cup will roll out over seven weekends starting early September. Given New Zealand's recent track record with booze-fuelled crowds, what will be done to manage alcohol consumption and will it be enough?

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Whether they're well informed, misinformed or just plain uninformed, people keep saying things about drugs, and we keep recording them here.





**THE INK** was barely dry on the Law Commission's *Controlling and Regulating Drugs* report when critics began the ritual wailing and gnashing of teeth about it being "soft on drugs."

The responses from the Sensible Sentencing Trust and Family First were predictable, but avoidable. Media outlets giving airtime to these so-called "experts" (neither lobby group having any track record in evidence-based drug policy) was extremely unfortunate. One newspaper even published a story about the Commission's proposal to decriminalise cannabis – a recommendation that was nowhere to be found in their report. Had these people actually read the report?

Sadly, drug policy debates in New Zealand descend too quickly into dogmatic rants about 'soft' versus 'hard' drug policy, with little in the way of analysis or fact informing those debates.

The report includes 144 recommendations for law reform, the most significant being that the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975 be scrapped and replaced with a new law administered by the Ministry of Health. This recognises what many of us have been saying for years – the 'drug problem' in our country is primarily a health issue best addressed through health and social policies and interventions.

In this regard, the Law Commission, in 2011, has come to the same conclusion as the Blake-Palmer Policy Review 1968–1973 which said, "There are kinder and more effective methods than reliance on criminal law alone to deal with the misuse of drugs."

A health-focussed law does not equate to a "soft" drug law. The Law Commission clearly states: "We have not suggested any dilution of New Zealand's prohibition approach... Nor should we wish to. We believe that there must continue to be vigorous law enforcement focus on large scale commercial dealing, backed up by strong penalties." Nothing soft about that.

The Law Commission does articulate a clear way forward, especially for a new regulatory approach to so-called "legal highs" and a mandatory diversion scheme for lower level drug offending. Here the Law Commission simply draws from the experience of our Australian cousins who have been running highly successful diversion schemes since 1999.

The Government is now considering its response to this seminal report. A sober and considered response from them will allow us to move our drug law into the 21st century.

Happy reading, Ross Bell. ■

### Australian Winter School Conference

9–10 June, Surfers Paradise, Australia  
Concurrent Disorders: Current Discourses is the theme for this conference, which will increase levels of knowledge and professional skills, present the most recent research and demonstrate its relevance to those working in the alcohol and other drugs field. The Australian Winter School also has an intersectional focus to enhance networking and cross-disciplines understanding.

[www.winterschool.info](http://www.winterschool.info)

### Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia Conference

15–17 June, Melbourne, Australia  
The 2011 DANA conference theme is Exploring the Frontiers of Drug and Alcohol Nursing. This theme explains the wide variety of healthcare settings in which alcohol and drug nurses work.

[www.danaconference.com.au](http://www.danaconference.com.au)

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

17–20 July, Rome, Italy  
This is the world's largest open scientific conference on HIV/AIDS. Held every 2 years, the conference attracts about 5,000 delegates from all over the world to help examine, explore and inform the global response to HIV/AIDS.

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

### International Drugs and Driving Symposium

17–18 July, Montreal, Canada  
This 2-day symposium to discuss drugs and driving is an international first. The use of drugs has long been considered a major social problem. However, the acute and devastating consequences of drugged driving have only recently come to the forefront of public attention. This symposium will foster an international exchange of ideas in order to implement evidence-based responses and policies to make this growing problem smaller.

[www.ccsa.ca](http://www.ccsa.ca)

### Addiction Treatment Leadership Day

21 July, Auckland  
Addiction Treatment Leadership Day brings together leaders in the addiction sector workforce from the fields of policy, planning, funding,

training and education, consumers, service management and delivery to facilitate professional networking.  
[www.matuaraki.org.nz](http://www.matuaraki.org.nz)

### Public Health Association Conference

31 August–2 September, Christchurch  
The PHA conference has three themes: vision, sustainability and diversity. They aim to explore our vision for our future, solutions we can find today that will help protect further generations, how we can build community resiliency and how we can positively embrace our diversity.

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

### Cutting Edge

1–3 September, Auckland  
Cutting Edge is the national addiction treatment sector conference covering alcohol, other drugs, problem gambling and smoking cessation. The conference theme is Recovery and Wellbeing.

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

### International Federation of Non-Government Organisations Conference

8–11 November, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
The theme of the conference is Strength, Unity and Diversity: Time for an International Voice for NGOs. The conference will provide a forum for decision makers and professionals to gain an understanding of NGO issues and needs in relation to addressing alcohol and other drug use and associated harm. There will be a particular focus on the Asian and Pacific regions.

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

### The Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and Other Drugs 2011 Conference

13–16 November, Hobart, Australia  
APSAD will feature a rich programme of national and international speakers sharing new insights in neuroscience, interventions, policy innovations and emerging challenges for our sector.

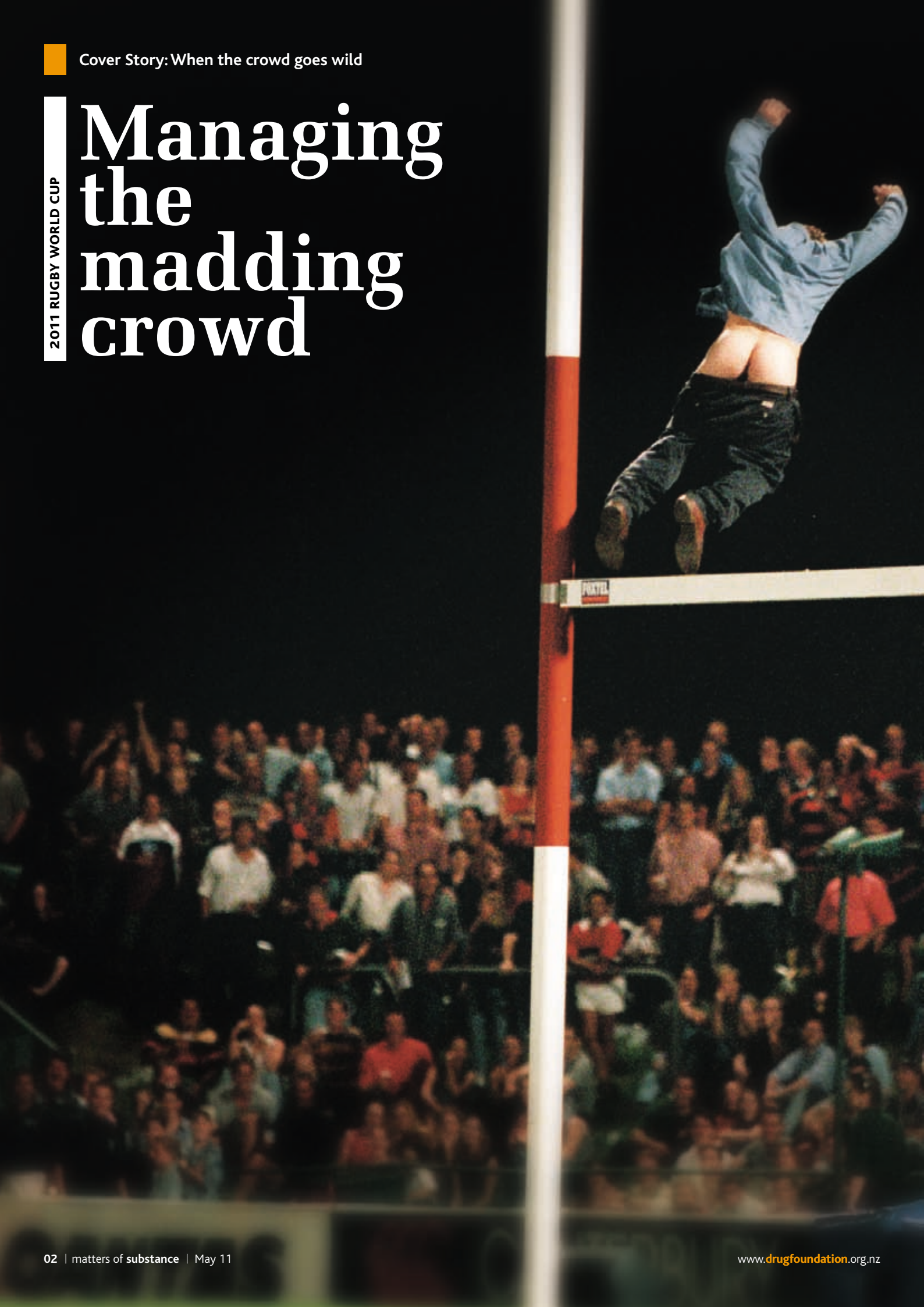
[www.apsadconference.com.au](http://www.apsadconference.com.au)

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Cover Story: When the crowd goes wild

2011 RUGBY WORLD CUP

# Managing the madding crowd







The eyes of the rugby-loving world will be on New Zealand this spring as we host the 2011 Rugby World Cup, but while moderate drinking may be part of the event for many, agencies and sports leaders alike have serious concerns for those who will drink to excess and potentially become aggressive, obnoxious, violent and dangerously disoriented. **Keri Welham** asks how do you control a booze-fuelled sports crowd and what is being done to ensure this party doesn't turn ugly?

#### 2011 RUGBY WORLD CUP

The 2011 Rugby World Cup will roll out over seven weekends starting Friday 9 September with a clash between New Zealand and Tonga, from 8.30pm. The opening match will be held at Eden Park, as will the final on Sunday 23 October at 9pm.

The tournament will involve 900 players and support staff from 20 nations, 48 matches over 45 days, 1,388 balls for matches and practice, and 1.65 million tickets across 12 venues. Organisers estimate a total of 300,000 glasses will be required for beverages served across all stadia.

Official estimates of the economic benefit for New Zealand sit at about \$507 million. It is anticipated 85,000 people will visit New Zealand for the event.

Any profits will be shared 50/50 between the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) and the New Zealand government. However, any shortfall will be disproportionately worn by the taxpayer with losses split a third to the NZRU and two-thirds to the government.

Tournament boss Martin Snedden played cricket for New Zealand in the 1980s and is a former CEO of New Zealand Cricket. It was announced late in 2006 that he would run the tournament organising body, Rugby New Zealand 2011. (Source: RWC 2011)

IN THE build-up to this year's Rugby World Cup, there's been a lot of focus on the planned entertainment hub dubbed Party Central, drinking vessels at stadia and fast-tracked liquor licences.

In fact, at times, there's appeared to be more concern about setting the scene for maximising entertainment income than any other aspect of the event. Which begs the question: are many New Zealanders viewing this display of top-flight rugby union as just an excuse for a gargantuan national piss-up? And if so, what harm might be done along the way?

The reputational damage that can be

delivered by alcohol-fuelled spectators at major sporting events was made obvious when the Kangaroos met the Kiwis at Eden Park in November last year. The Four Nations rugby league international, won by Australia 34–20, was widely seen as a test of the venue ahead of this year's Rugby World Cup (RWC).

There were six arrests from the crowd of 44,500, and video footage shows some of the hundreds of plastic bottles that were thrown onto the pitch. Kiwi fans booed during the Australian national anthem, families were abused,





“The potential and scarcely foreseen possibility that the All Blacks will lose has entered into our risk management.”

Former Police Commissioner Howard Broad

and fighting that began inside the stadium continued outside. Residents complained about loud, drunken fans who smoked pot outside their homes, a liquor ban outside the stadium was completely ignored, and traffic was mayhem.

Prime Minister John Key said at the time the drunken bedlam on display at the league test was “not how we want to showcase the country when we host the third biggest sporting event in the world.”

RWC organisers responded with promises to beef up security and the Police presence at this year’s tournament.

But it wasn’t the first time Kiwi crowds had gone feral on the international stage. In 2003, security was increased at the Wellington Rugby Union Sevens tournament after drunken fans pelted the visiting Australian team with bottles. Media reports from the time show 20 people were arrested and 35 were ejected.

And then there was the Bledisloe Cup match in Melbourne last July. New Zealand Cricket Chief Executive Justin Vaughan wrote about the All Blacks test against the Wallabies in a comment piece that garnered extensive publicity. He says the experience was marred by loutish behaviour from Kiwi fans who used foul language to bait Australian spectators and whose alcohol-fed antics created, in his words, “a tense and unfriendly atmosphere”.

“I was frankly embarrassed to be a New Zealander at the ground on Saturday night, surrounded as I was by a good number of drunk, aggressive and obnoxious All Blacks supporters.”

The All Blacks won that clash, 49–28. If that’s how Kiwi fans celebrate, how do they commiserate?

Last year, then Police Commissioner Howard Broad told reporters, “The potential and scarcely foreseen possibility that the All Blacks will lose has entered into our risk management.” Police revealed they had done extensive research into the effects of test matches on crime rates.

*The Dominion Post* reported that, after a Scottish Cup football final between Glasgow clubs Celtic and Rangers, there was an 80 percent spike in reports of domestic violence. While New Zealand Police had not seen such pronounced increases here, they had noted a small increase in disorderly behaviour and violent offending in the host city after a test match.

Women’s Refuge reported it had been working alongside Police to address the potentially negative impact the World Cup could have on domestic violence.

Spokeswoman Kiri Hannifin told *The Dominion Post*, “So if the All Blacks, dare I say it, lose next year, those people who have a tendency to be violent, this may give them an excuse to be more violent or to be violent again.”



#### KEY FACTS

##### 2011 RUGBY WORLD CUP

➤ 900

PLAYERS AND SUPPORT  
STAFF FROM 20 NATIONS, 48  
MATCHES OVER 45 DAYS

➤ 1.65<sup>M</sup>

TICKETS SOLD ACROSS  
12 VENUES

➤ 50/50

PROFIT SHARE BETWEEN  
THE NZRFU AND THE NZ  
GOVERNMENT

➤ 300<sup>,000</sup>

GLASSES REQUIRED FOR  
BEVERAGES SOLD AT STADIA



She says alcohol, the RWC and an All Blacks loss could bode very badly for some families affected by violence.

It could also be a bad combination for those who work in emergency services.

Wellington Regional Hospital Emergency Medicine Specialist and Clinical Toxicologist Paul Quigley says the country's accident and emergency units are braced for an RWC deluge.

He says rugby test matches result in higher presentations at accident and emergency.

"We always get a significant surge in numbers, often doubling our night presentations [between 10pm and 8am].

"This has a negative impact on our 'normal' patients who present at the same time. Also, we have increased presentations over the subsequent 48 hours with minor injuries."

Quigley has been unimpressed by the government's efforts to manage the additional burden of the RWC for health professionals. He says plans for sober-up units and field hospitals were first developed in October 2010, but the combination of the recession and February's Christchurch earthquake put an end to nationwide planning, and each region is now developing its own approach.

"Here in the Wellington district, we are going to be better off than some as we have some initial plans and have even rehearsed some of them during the Sevens competition."

Quigley says he'd like to see an appropriate portion of the projected half-billion-dollar windfall from the RWC funnelled into the health services, which will be stretched to cope with the fallout of the event.

New Zealand has only won the World Cup once, on home soil at the inaugural tournament in 1987, and every other year has represented various levels of disappointment for fans.

Rugby New Zealand 2011 boss Martin Snedden has previously admitted concerns about what might happen if New Zealand fails to win the 38cm tall, gilded silver Webb Ellis Cup again this year.

"There is always a risk that the





All Blacks will not meet our very high expectations next year. If they don't, our sense of sportsmanship will be tested to the hilt. If that happens, how will we react?"

Snedden was unavailable to comment. However, his Media Manager Mike Jaspers referred *Matters of Substance* to an opinion piece that ran in *The New Zealand Herald* in November 2010.

In it, Snedden acknowledges that the furore at Eden Park for the league match was a problem for Rugby New Zealand 2011.

"Running something as major as [this] year's event is just as much a confidence game as it is about getting things dead right operationally. Eden Park... is our most crucial venue," he writes.

Snedden says crowd control has been an issue "high on our radar" for some time.

He says organisations including Police, the Alcohol Advisory Council and district licensing authorities have been involved in developing an alcohol management plan across all match venues.

Each venue must apply for a customised RWC 2011 liquor licence. The licences insist on measures such as increased numbers and visibility of security staff and Police, increased monitoring of patron behaviour by trained staff, free water and a range of food and low-alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks available for purchase.

In September 2010, RWC Minister Murray McCully was given controversial powers to fast-track liquor licences and hospitality arrangements for the RWC.

McCully can over-ride the decisions of the Rugby World Cup Authority, which was set up to oversee applications relating to the tournament in a much shorter timeframe than is normally needed for consents.

While McCully must take in to account the recommendations of the Authority and the views of fellow ministers, his decision is final.

He also controversially decided to allow beer in cans at RWC stadia, against the wishes of Police and his colleague, Police Minister Judith Collins. Police were worried cans would be used as missiles.

McCully told Radio New Zealand it would have cost a significant amount of money to install wet-pour bars in the nine stadia that did not have them. The estimate for Eden Park alone was \$1 million.

The New Zealand Drug Foundation lodged an Official Information Act request regarding all correspondence about the beer in cans issue with Minister McCully's office.

The information received includes a March 2010 letter from Broad, then Police Commissioner, outlining the agreed measures for selling alcohol at stadia:

- Vessels will be 330ml cans of beer, opened at point of sale, and PET bottles of wine. (Other documents show Police wanted 270ml of beer, served in plastic cups.)
- Each person will be served no more than four drinks at once. Police can bring this limit lower if they assess high levels of intoxication at an event. (Police wanted no more than two drinks at once.)
- Beer served will be 5 percent alcohol. Lower strength beer will be available at a cheaper price.
- Only beer and wine will be on sale at public bars in stadia, including lounge areas.
- Bars may open for up to 2 hours before a game.

At fan zones, such as the venue Prime Minister John Key dubbed Party Central on Auckland's Queen's Wharf, wine and beer will be served in plastic cups.

DB Breweries General Manager of Corporate Affairs Mark Campbell is heavily involved in the day-to-day project management of Heineken's sponsorship of the 2011 Rugby World Cup. DB is a subsidiary of Asia Pacific Breweries, of which Heineken is a major shareholder. Heineken has been associated with the RWC since 1995.

An email written by Campbell to Minister McCully's office on 4 February 2010, states: "My objective is to get consensus (Police) on having Heineken cans at all 13 stadia for the Rugby World Cup. Currently, nine of the 13 stadia sell cans."



“Running something as major as [this] year's event is just as much a confidence game as it is about getting things dead right operationally.”

Rugby New Zealand 2011 boss  
Martin Snedden



“We always get a significant surge in numbers, often doubling our night presentations [between 10pm and 8am].”

Wellington Regional Hospital  
Emergency Medicine Specialist  
and Clinical Toxicologist Paul Quigley



“We are realistic that some people may drink excessively over this period. However, our consumers are adults, capable of making their own decisions about the way they behave and consume alcohol.”

DB Breweries General Manager of  
Corporate Affairs Mark Campbell

In a presentation Campbell used for various audiences, including Police, he said, “Having cans at all stadia would create a consistent, premium experience nationwide.”

He also argued cans were environmentally preferable to plastic, were easier to store and offered a longer shelf life for the product.

Campbell told *Matters of Substance* that DB did not exert any pressure on McCully to ensure beer would be served in the cans emblazoned with the sponsor’s name and branding.

“DB most certainly did not ‘apply pressure’, as you suggest, to the government. Rugby New Zealand 2011 is asking the caterers to depressurise cans sold in stadia and pour beer into disposable cups before fans return to their seats. We are currently working with the caterers to ensure they have sufficient plastic cups to achieve this.”

Campbell says DB’s preferred scenario would have been wet-pour areas, but unfortunately, this technology was not included in the upgrade of stadia such as Eden Park.

“We are realistic that some people may drink excessively over this period. However, our consumers are adults, capable of making their own decisions about the way they behave and consume alcohol.

“We acknowledge we have a role to play in minimising the abuse of alcohol, particularly during Rugby World Cup 2011,” Campbell says.

“Ultimately, we want rugby fans to have an enjoyable and memorable experience throughout Rugby World Cup 2011, which is why we are working closely with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure this end, including government, Police, local authorities and caterers.”

These are the same parties that have been involved in developing Rugby New Zealand 2011’s alcohol management plan. Under the plan, Heineken (at 5 percent alcohol) will be the only full-strength beer offered in stadia, alongside Heineken’s own light beer, Amstel Light, which is 2.5 percent alcohol. Campbell says details are yet to be confirmed, but DB would like, and fully expects, the



Amstel Light cans to be sold more cheaply than the Heineken cans. And he insists Amstel Light will be available at every venue.

“We will ensure that there is Amstel Light available everywhere, all of the time. It just makes good sense.”

DB is anticipating Amstel Light will make up less than 10 percent of sales at the venues, but as so many of the spectators will be overseas visitors, Campbell says it is difficult to predict consumption.

He says the decision to offer cans in stadia was a collective one made by parties involved in the development of the alcohol management plan.

When asked about DB’s efforts to minimise the negative consequences of excessive alcohol consumption during the tournament, Campbell says, “Heineken New Zealand and Heineken International will be activating a local ‘Enjoy Heineken Responsibly’ campaign, which will be highly visible from September.”

He says DB firmly believes there is a place for alcohol sponsorship of sport.

“A ban on alcohol sports sponsorship would have dire consequences for clubs and sports teams around New Zealand, from minor competitions to international

events such as Rugby World Cup 2011. Heineken has proven time and time again that it can sponsor hugely successful events locally including the Heineken Open (tennis), which we have sponsored for well over a decade without incident.”

So how exactly do you control a spirited sports crowd?

DB says the high cost of tickets may be the first step to instilling some reserve into the Kiwi drinking psyche.

“The cost of tickets to Rugby World Cup 2011 will be prohibitive to many Kiwis,” Campbell says.

“Those who do purchase tickets are unlikely to risk being refused bar service, or being evicted, by drinking excessively and behaving badly. Peer pressure often applies at events such as major premium international sporting events where the crowd will quickly pinpoint someone who is misbehaving or acting inappropriately and point them out to authorities.

“The sheer presence of Police in stadia during Rugby World Cup 2011 will also send a very clear signal to ticket-holders that they are expected to behave in a mature and responsible manner.

“Overall, we do think Kiwis have



a healthy attitude towards drinking at sporting fixtures because of the increasing cost of attending events and the repercussions for not behaving appropriately. The stadia themselves have very strict rules around serving alcohol and ensuring consumption is moderated."

Wellington's Inspector Dave Allen is second in charge of Operation Rugby World Cup 2011, the official New Zealand Police response to the event. He's also optimistic that most Kiwis and international visitors will behave themselves and drink responsibly.

"Basic common sense will tell you people spending a lot of money on tickets and people who have travelled here from overseas at great expense are going to be attending primarily for the rugby," he told *Matters of Substance*.

"But with any event of this nature and its inevitable association with alcohol, you can't always be confident common sense will prevail."

While he doesn't think the Rugby World Cup will descend into an unbridled booze-fest – rugby the game is culturally important to us after all – he says Police are prepared for what they term "any surge in public response".

On the cans issue, he says that, while the Police view on whether or not to provide beer in cans didn't prevail, the important thing is we have a decision that we now have to work with.

"We have plenty of options for dealing with people who want to do the wrong thing (with beer cans or otherwise), and those options range from eviction to criminal charges."

He's also sure the large Police presence will be a firm deterrent.

"Police, security guards and stadia staff will be assessing people for sobriety and what they might be carrying and will bar anyone from entry who may cause trouble."

"People purchasing a ticket and entering a venue have actually willingly entered into a contract to abide by certain required rules as published on the RWC website – and there will be similar rules in place at fan zones such as Party Central."

"But for us, this isn't about curtailing normal revelry, and we certainly don't want to be the 'fun police'. We want people to enjoy the rugby and to enjoy alcohol while they're there but also keep things in perspective and remember that there are behavioural expectations they need to conform to."

Whether Kiwis have a healthy attitude towards drinking at sporting fixtures,

**“With any event of this nature and its inevitable association with alcohol, you can't always be confident common sense will prevail.”**

Inspector Dave Allen

as DB's Mark Campbell believes, and whether we're collectively capable of "keeping things in perspective" are debatable points for many – and fan behaviour at recent events certainly gives cause for concern.

Inspector Dave Allen's faith in sporting fans' love of rugby and his confidence that crowd control plans will be effective may provide some measure of reassurance. But ultimately, the proof of the pudding will be in the drinking. ■

Keri Welham is a Bay of Plenty-based writer.

#### HOST VENUES



#### Quotes of Substance

**“It is far better they are going to a doctor or going to a chemist and are getting their script than turning tricks as a prostitute or robbing their mates.”**

Former UK Drugs Minister **Bob Ainsworth** argued in the House of Commons that all drugs should be legalised, saying this would disempower the international criminal gangs that make billions of pounds from the drugs trade. He also encouraged politicians and the media to engage in a "genuine and grown-up debate about alternatives to prohibition."

**“Not one of us, nor any of our children, nor any of their children, nor anyone at all even unto the seventh generation, will live to see it dawn. But one day, humanity will look back on the ‘war against drugs’ with a shiver of the revulsion induced today by slavery, the criminalisation of homosexuality and other historic high points of legalised dementia.”**

**Matthew Norman** argues in *The Independent* that we'll be stuck with the 'war against drugs' mentality as long as the right wing press dominates British drug policy debate.

**“I've just been a silly old lady.”**

A distraught **Sharon Armstrong**, former Deputy Chief Executive of the Māori Language Commission, says she was duped into smuggling 5 kilograms of cocaine out of Argentina by an online lover.

**“Isn't it funny how people who no longer have responsibility for anyone's safety or security suddenly see the light?”**

America's Drug Czar **Gil Kerlikowske** on former Mexican President **Vicente Fox's** new-found support for legalisation.

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# Interview with Steve Walsh



👉 Most New Zealanders drink to get drunk – and we get aggressive. We're a little immature. 👉

Steve Walsh is now sober and enjoying a life of mountain biking and art galleries. When he takes the field at this year's Rugby World Cup, he'll be back at the peak of his game as an international rugby referee. Steve talks to **Keri Welham**.



**THE LAST** time Steve Walsh had a drink was April 2009, and he drank to black out, as usual. It was a pattern that began when he was a 13-year-old drinking for the first time and ended after the New Zealand Rugby Union sacked him for a run of misdemeanours in 2009.

Walsh's life began to unravel in December 2008. He was 106.6kg, regularly too lethargic to attend training, and he says his on-field performance was "atrocious".

"I wasn't putting in the work."

He drank twice a week and always to excess.

"I was definitely a binge drinker. Right from the first time I got drunk, I drank to black out, and if I didn't drink to black out, I didn't think I'd had a good night. I used alcohol because I felt uncomfortable with who I was."

On a weeknight in the midst of a South Africa, New Zealand and Australia Rugby refereeing conference in Sydney, he went out and drank until daylight. He says he arrived at the conference the next morning "worse for wear". His boss asked him to leave the conference and began a formal complaint process, which led to disciplinary employment measures.

"That wasn't an isolated incident. I always said, and truly believe, that I gave them [the New Zealand Rugby Union] the ammo," Walsh says.

Eventually, Walsh was sacked from the job he had pursued after a spinal deformity at 13 scuttled his playing ambitions. It was a career that had brought him a degree of fame when, in 1998, he refereed his first test match – Argentina vs France in Buenos Aires. He was just 26. By the time he was stood down, he had refereed in three World Cups and had 40 test matches on his CV. He was young, successful and, according to some commentators on news websites, a "hottie".

However, the fame meant a very public unravelling when he was sacked.

"It was a difficult process to go through... and the public humiliation and shame... [but] I just think it's the best thing that's ever happened in my life."

He now feels more comfortable in

Sydney, the scene of his career-altering night out, than he does back home in New Zealand. He says Sydney has given him "a fresh start".

"I don't really see myself going back to New Zealand. Never say never [but]... I feel freer over here, rightly or wrongly. When you're in Australia or in Sydney, rugby is the fourth code and fourth sport, and I just don't feel the eyes on me, so you can get on with being yourself."

"I've made some big life changes and I've never been happier... I never thought I could have fun without alcohol."

These days, Walsh loves spending time at Sydney's famous beaches. He mountain bikes, goes to art galleries and buys fresh fruit from Saturday morning markets. He is in the early stages of a new romance with "a lovely girl" and says he hopes he is more capable of expressing himself now in relationships – "much more attentive and less emotional".

He attends a fellowship that supports people with drinking problems and says he now places a greater value on life.

Bars and clubs no longer appeal so he doesn't go to them often.

"If you sit in a barber's chair long enough, you're gonna end up with a haircut. I don't feel nervous around alcohol and people drinking... I just prefer going to cafés."

"I would like to think I will never drink again. I know I feel better about myself today than I have in the past, but I still realise I'm an alcoholic and I do delude myself sometimes and think about the few occasions I was a 'good drunk' instead of the fact that, most of the time, I used to wake up feeling shame because of my actions the night before. It truly is one day at a time for me, because to look too far into the future is very challenging."

Walsh says he had a lot of fun drinking, and he doesn't want to appear to be preaching to people who don't have a problem with it, but he does think New Zealand society has a troubling attitude towards alcohol.

"I'm not here to say all drinking is bad, but I do look at New Zealand society, especially when I travel

through Europe. Most New Zealanders drink to get drunk – and we get aggressive. We're a little immature."

He says there was a culture in the sports clubs he belonged to – both rugby and surf lifesaving – to draw a connection between a man's masculinity and his drinking capacity.

That said, he believes New Zealand's problematic drinking culture is not exclusive to the sporting environment.

"I definitely don't think it is an issue with professional rugby as I witnessed a massive shift in the 'culture of drinking' that is tolerated by the teams since I started in the professional environment in 1997. Like all society in New Zealand, drinking in excess and socialising are seen as going hand in hand, and that is the same in the professional rugby environment. So I really see that it's a society problem in New Zealand and not exclusive to the sporting arena."

Walsh's alcohol abuse led to depression, which ultimately affected the relationship he was in at the time. He would drink after every game he refereed, as a "release", and he and his partner would have another big night mid-week.

"I had a good time, but was it destructive? Yeah. I couldn't continue with that lifestyle."

These days, Walsh sits between 95kg and 97kg. He trains 6 days a week and says, at 39, his fitness is as good as when he was about 22 years old.

The climb back to the top of his field didn't come easy. He started refereeing club football in Sydney, while working as a labourer and courier driver, and made a return, dressed in Australian colours, refereeing Super 14 matches in 2010.

"I have found it far harder than I thought," he says. "I wanted it too much. I've just got to relax and trust myself. Since the beginning of this year, so far, I feel so much more comfortable on the park."

And the selectors appear to agree. Walsh's comeback was confirmed when he was announced as Australia's only referee selected to officiate at the 2011 Rugby World Cup. ■

# Mexico's losing battle



Photo courtesy of Marc Spier

The Mexican Drug War has been raging for decades between rival drug cartels fighting each other and the government forces trying to bring their drug trafficking to an end. It's a war the government is currently losing, and as **Hamish McKenzie** writes, every day, the situation spirals further out of control and the body count grows higher.

**ZAPATA** probably never expected to become the focus of intense national news. The small Texas border town of about 5,000 people has hosted its fair share of tourists, but otherwise it just sits quietly on the shores of Falcon Lake, a body of water that straddles Texas and Mexico and is packed with monster bass. Prime fishing attracts anglers from all over the US and Mexico.

But on 30 September last year, an event on the lake would bring a flood of media and investigators to Zapata. An American jet-skier had been shot and killed – presumably by members of a drug cartel, Los Zetas, that operated on the Mexican side of the lake.

No one really knows why 30-year-old David Hartley was shot that day. The word in Zapata is that, for whatever reason, he got too close to the cartel's stash on a small island in the lake. Hartley and his wife Tiffany had been taking photos of a nearby sunken church – partially covered in water when the banks of the Rio Grande were flooded in the 1950s to make the lake – and perhaps their lens was pointed at something the shooters wanted to protect. Hartley, an oil and gas worker who worked in Mexico

and had recently moved back to Texas, may have been mistaken for a spy.

Unsubstantiated town gossip has it that the killing was a drug deal gone wrong or that Tiffany had David knocked off so she could claim the insurance money. Zapata Sheriff Sigi Gonzalez doesn't believe those theories. He believes Tiffany, who says the two were chased by armed gunmen near the sunken church. Gonzalez says Tiffany's account

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**“ Insatiable demand from the US and the dangers of the [drug] trade ensure great profits for those willing to risk their lives. ”**

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of the shooting was corroborated by witnesses on the lake that day.

When Felipe Calderon was elected Mexican President in 2006, he promised a war on drugs. Power and violence among the cartels had reached critical levels, so he vowed to bring in the army to crack down on the cartels and restore peace in the troubled regions.

In the intervening years, however,



the drugs trade has proven impossible to stamp out. Insatiable demand from the US and the dangers of the trade ensure great profits for those willing to risk their lives – and in poverty-stricken Mexico, there are plenty such people. With Colombia's drug kingpins wallowing in US jails, large parts of the drug trade have shifted north, with cartels emerging all over Mexico. With later splintering and infighting, cartel violence now spans much of the country. Recruits are sought from among the country's many drug-dependent and cash-strapped youths. In some cases, the cartel paramilitaries are better equipped than the national army, which is supposed to be restoring order.

The result has been a bloody mess. Since Calderon took power, 35,000 lives have been lost in the conflict – 15,000 in 2010 alone. Most of the victims – 89 percent – were suspected gang members, but some high-profile murders have grabbed headlines. At least 14 mayors and nine journalists have been killed. Police chiefs are another favourite target. In February, for instance, the head of the security and intelligence agency in the northern state of Nuevo Leon was shot five times in an SUV. He was one among many.

Street shoot-outs in broad daylight, narco-banners bearing cartel propaganda strung across roads, severed heads left on display in public places – these are the grisly scenes of Mexico's modern reality. In one particularly sickening and

“The result has been a bloody mess. Since Calderon took power, 35,000 lives have been lost in the conflict – 15,000 in 2010 alone.”

memorable incident in July last year, presumed cartel gunmen opened fire on a birthday party held at the grounds of a recreation centre in a northern town, killing 17 people aged between 20 and 38.

The cartels just over the border from Zapata – the Zetas and their rivals, the Gulf cartel – have had spies in the town for years, says Gonzalez. They monitor the comings and goings on the lake,

identifying the best times for ‘mules’ to deliver small shipments of drugs – mainly marijuana – in nondescript wooden fishing boats. A border patrol agent says there are so many of these boats on the lake that “it’s like blending in with traffic”.

“Here, they’re keeping a somewhat low profile, but they’re very active,” says Gonzalez, who is paid US\$50,000 a year to help keep Zapata County safe. In the Laredo sector, which includes Zapata County and an area spanning about 100,000 square miles, 30,000 Mexicans are arrested for drugs or illegal entry into the US every year. Few of these arrests are of gang members, who usually do their best to avoid US officials. But that doesn’t mean the US is foreign ground for the cartels. A 2010 US Justice Department report found Mexican drug trafficking organisations have a presence in more than 270 US cities, where they “maintain drug distribution networks”. Three years earlier, they were in 100 cities.

The Hartley shooting on Falcon Lake is only one of a small number of isolated incidents in which non-Mexicans have been victims of the cartel conflicts, but it is indicative of a drug war that is now completely out of control. Says Sheriff Sigi Gonzalez, “We’ve never seen anything like this before.”

Calderon’s war has done nothing to solve Mexico’s violent crisis. In fact, it has likely exacerbated the problem. According to a recent nationwide survey by Mexico’s National Statistics Bureau, more than 70 percent of respondents said the overall security situation was worse in 2010 than in the previous year, and 41 percent said they didn’t feel safe to walk alone between 4pm and 7pm in the area where they lived.

The violence is costing the country in investment, too. International companies are thinking twice about doing business there. In December, JP Morgan’s chief economist for Mexico told the *Wall Street Journal* that drug-related violence has probably cost the country about US\$4 billion in foreign investment.

Meanwhile, according to diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks, the US has lost confidence in the Mexican army’s ability to win the drug war. The cables,

## Quotes of Substance

“If you need to spend that much money advertising your product and then have a monopoly of it in the stadium, that says to me your product is not very good.”

“If you’re forcing people to drink it, rather than giving people some choice, perhaps you should really reconsider what it is exactly that you are manufacturing; that swill you’re forcing down the necks of people who would rather not be drinking it.”

**Te Radar**, on Radio New Zealand’s Nine to Noon, shares his views on multinational companies like Heineken holding the Rugby World Cup’s captive audience to ransom.

“Think of preventive health care as the condom that most governments don’t want to wear...”

“You might say governments who can’t see beyond election cycles are a lot like teenagers who can’t see beyond the weekend. They live in the here and now. They want instant gratification.”

**Tapu Misa** laments the decision to cut funding to school-based health services, which provide advice on alcohol and drug issues and other health matters to students.

“I’m not wild about these products being sold at dairies. I’m glad the crazy promotions one of these companies has been mounting via Facebook will be ended. And I’m absolutely delighted that a decision has been made on careful consideration of the evidence, rather than as a knee-jerk political response.”

*Publicaddress.net* blogger **Russell Brown** agrees with drug policy Minister Peter Dunne’s decision to regulate synthetic cannabis products.

continued on page 18 ▶



Zapata Sheriff Sigi Gonzalez

Photo courtesy of Marc Spier

written by a US diplomat, derided the Mexican efforts as slow and clumsy and said they were no match for the sophisticated cartels.

Many commentators, policy analysts, political figures and lobbyists believe it is time for a new approach. Perhaps most prominently, former President Vicente Fox, a one-time Coca-Cola executive who ruled the country from 2000 to 2006, has called for the legalisation of all drugs.

“We should consider legalising the production, sale and distribution of drugs,” he wrote on his blog in August last year. “Radical prohibition strategies have never worked.”

Fox stressed that legalisation doesn’t mean that drugs are good but that something has to be done to combat the cartels’ power.

“We have to see it as a strategy to weaken and break the economic system that allows cartels to make huge profits, which, in turn, increases their power and capacity to corrupt.”

For Jorge Hernández Tinajero, President of CuPIHD, Mexico’s leading cross-discipline drug reform organisation, Fox’s involvement in the debate is not entirely welcome. Tinajero says Fox is

fighting for control over the conservative political party to which both he and the President belong. His views are more about taking a stand against the President than a real will to change drug policy, Tinajero reckons.

“I can say to him, ‘Welcome to this side, but in many ways when you remain

**“We should consider legalising the production, sale and distribution of drugs. Radical prohibition strategies have never worked.”**

Former Mexican President Vicente Fox

silent it’s better for us’.

Tinajero’s group prefers to talk about “regulation” rather than “legalisation”, because international treaties Mexico signed in 1961, 1971 and 1988 prevent drug legalisation.

“But within the treaties,” says Tinajero, “we have a lot of room to manoeuvre in order to regulate drugs to not be so harmful to society.”

He points to alcohol and tobacco regulations as examples.

Calderon’s war on drugs is short-sighted and damaging, says Tinajero.

“The worst part of this is he has closed all the exit ways that maybe he had... He can’t change the main strategy.

“During Calderon’s rule, his rhetoric has changed from ‘war on drugs’ to ‘war on organised crime and drugs’ to, now, ‘war on public insecurity’. It all amounts to same thing: failure.

“We think this government is done in drug politics – they don’t want to change anything. It is a very, very narrow strategy that only promotes violence.”

As a result, the Calderon administration is losing support badly, and drug-related violence is shaping up to be a significant issue in the 2012 presidential elections. Tinajero says it’s too early to know what approach the candidates will take – or who, even, the candidates will be – but he envisages only the extreme right-wingers would want to continue Calderon’s heavy-handed strategy.

“I think candidates are going to move to a more harm reduction, less violent approach.”

Meanwhile, any success the government has claimed in the war is





meaningless, he says. In September, for instance, Mexican marines captured an alleged leader of the Beltrán Leyva cartel, a seeming victory for the government in the wake of the killings of another Beltrán Leyva leader and a Sinaloa cartel leader earlier in the year. In August, they had captured a separate Beltrán Leyva leader.

“This is a new and resounding blow by the federal government against crime, given the high rank and dangerousness of this person inside one of the country’s most extensive criminal organisations, which has now been deeply weakened,” said a government security spokesman at the time of the September arrest.

The arrests, however, don’t seem to have had much impact on the flow of drugs in the country. Says Tinajero, “There has never been so much availability of drugs as now.”

A friend recently said to him, “You know, in Mexico City on a Friday night, it is much more difficult to make a call to get a taxi than it is to get a gram of cocaine.”

Tinajero is also at pains to point out that Mexico’s current problems can’t be blamed solely on drugs.

“The main problem in Mexico is violence – it’s inequality. It is social and institutional disintegration in many ways,” he says. “We don’t have an educational system that really works – it’s one of the worst in the world.”

It’s not only cartels that are an issue, says Tinajero, but corporations and

“You know, in Mexico City on a Friday night, it is much more difficult to make a call to get a taxi than it is to get a gram of cocaine.”

individuals in general are becoming disproportionately powerful.

“We have a lot of poverty here, and there is no real control from the state about the monopoly of violence. So the private interests are the ones that rule, and they are becoming more and more powerful.”

Despite its crushing poverty, Mexico is also home to the world’s richest man: Telecom tycoon Carlos Slim.

“We have the worst of all the worlds,” says Tinajero.

“We have plenty of drugs, we have no education to address them as a society, and we have violence and a war going on which is endless in our territory. I think the international community must be more aware of what is happening to Mexico, because it is going to happen to everyone in the mid-term or the long term if we keep going this way.”

Another stumbling block in the way of progress is corruption.

“It’s one of the top three problems in Mexico right now,” says Sylvia Longmire, a US-based intelligence analyst and the author of an upcoming book about Mexico’s drug wars.

Corruption in Mexico, she says, goes back hundreds of years to the colonial Spanish and the Catholic Church.

“It has always been a part of the culture and something that is more socially acceptable in Mexico than it is [in the US]. Trying to fight that is like bringing a knife to a gunfight.”

Corruption hampers all authorities in Mexico and helps deep-pocketed cartels ensure a degree of protection for their activities.

“You can find corruption at all levels of government,” says Longmire. Mexico’s

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We really enjoy putting *Matters of Substance* together to inform you of the big issues in the world of alcohol and other drugs. But do you enjoy reading it?

We're reviewing our magazine and need your feedback. It's important to us that we publish articles that are helpful to your work.

**What would you like to see more of?**

**What would you like to see less of?**

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Thank you.

former socialist government – led by the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) – long turned a blind eye to the cartels' operations.

While levels of violence in the PRI years were much lower, Longmire says this 'look the other way' approach helped cartels thrive and grow to be as powerful as they are today.

The political approach isn't all that has changed. Even within the last 2 years, the face of the drug wars has fast been transforming. For instance, in the northern city of Juarez, the country's most dangerous, the violence was once easily characterised as a fight between the Sinaloa and Juarez cartels, who were competing for the lucrative trafficking route right on the border with the Texan city of El Paso.

Those cartels are still there, says

**“What you have is total chaos. Honestly, nobody can tell you who's doing the killing, and nobody can tell you who the victims are. None of the murders are investigated.”**

US intelligence analyst Sylvia Longmire

Longmire, but there are now also a huge number of gangs fighting each other for drugs, money and territory. The city has 500 suburbs, each of which has its own gang.

“If you put all that together in a huge mix, what you have is total chaos. Honestly, nobody can tell you who's doing the killing, and nobody can tell you who the victims are. None of the murders are investigated. Nobody wants to ask too many questions because they're afraid of becoming a victim themselves.”

In 2010, Juarez, a city of 1.5 million people in a country of 111 million, accounted for 18 percent of all Mexico's drug war-related deaths.

The violence may be concentrated in certain states, but it shifts. The drug hot spots today look very different from the drug hot spots 2 years ago. Take Monterrey, Mexico's richest city, which lies just a few hours' drive south of the

Texas border. A couple of years ago, Monterrey was relatively peaceful and quiet.

“A lot of drug cartel members went to live in Monterrey because it's such a nice place,” says Longmire.

“Now it's an absolute mess for grenade attacks and road blocks. It's an extremely violent city right now.”

While the violence is widespread and continuing to sprawl, it is still safe for tourists to travel in many parts of Mexico – especially on the popular Yucatan peninsula, along the Riviera Maya and in southern Baja California. But it pays to be aware of what cartels are operating in each area. Longmire says if you want to find the safest areas, look for the places where there is only one cartel in control.

Back in Zapata, US authorities still have no leads in the David Hartley case. His body hasn't turned up, and Sheriff Gonzalez has been told by cartel contacts that it will never be found.

Because the crime happened on the Mexican side of the border and, allegedly, at the hands of Mexican citizens, it is the job of the Mexican Police to solve it. A resolution is unlikely, to say the least. Only 1 percent of reported crimes in the country result in sentencing, according to the country's Human Rights Commission, and there are strong incentives for authorities to not get too close to the truth. The first chief investigator of the case found that out the hard way. Within days of the Hartley murder, his head was delivered in a suitcase to the Mexican military. ■

Hamish McKenzie is writer based in the US.





# Time to count the costs of the war on drugs



**Steve Rolles** introduces a new collaborative project by a range of organisations sharing a desire to reduce the unintended costs of the ‘war on drugs’.

**COUNT  
THE COSTS**  
50 YEARS OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

‘COUNT THE COSTS’ was launched to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which cemented global drug control into an international legal framework that has remained largely unchanged to this day. It is a criminal justice-led approach built around Police and military enforcement against drug production and supply, with punitive responses to drug users.

While doubtless implemented with good intentions, experience shows the policy has failed to achieve its goal of reducing or eliminating drug production, supply and use – all of which have risen dramatically. It has, however, had a range of what the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has referred to as “unintended negative consequences”.

These destructive impacts, vast and tragic in their scale, are primarily related to the drug trade itself, control of which has defaulted to violent criminal profiteers. Attempts to combat this illicit trade have resulted in the mass criminalisation of often vulnerable populations of drug

users and growers. It has also diverted resources away from proven public health interventions and towards futile and counterproductive enforcement responses.

While it is important to acknowledge and respond to the very real personal and social costs of problematic drug use, the Count the Costs project specifically focuses on the costs created or exacerbated by drug law enforcement – the so called ‘war on drugs’. This is a

“While doubtless implemented with good intentions, experience shows the [‘war on drugs’] has failed to achieve its goal of reducing or eliminating drug production, supply and use – all of which have risen dramatically.”

vital distinction to highlight, as all too often, public debate either ignores problems created by drug policy and law enforcement or confuses and conflates them with the harms from drug use.

It is these costs of the drug war itself – as well as the laws that create them – that have rarely, if ever, been subjected to meaningful scrutiny and evaluation by the governments and agencies

responsible for drug policies. Without such scrutiny, the debate about how policy should evolve in a rapidly changing world can never be adequate and will never achieve the safer, healthier and more just world we all strive for.

Although governments and the UN have failed to systematically evaluate the costs of the ‘war on drugs’, there is nonetheless a substantial body of research available to demonstrate their scale and scope. The Count the Costs project aims to highlight the negative impacts of the ‘war on drugs’ in seven key policy areas: development and security; public health; human rights; stigma and discrimination; crime; the environment; and economics.

Throughout this 50th anniversary year, briefings for each of the seven cost headings summarising the key negative impacts of the ‘war on drugs’ in different areas of the world will be published on the Count the Costs website, alongside a library of factual and analytical resources from around the globe, including reports, images, video and audio media (submissions to this resource collection are very welcome).

The briefings and resource collection will be the primary tools for reaching out to a wider NGO and public audience that has historically had only limited engagement with the debate. A key element of this outreach will be building

## Quotes of Substance

“Several of them were walking decidedly uncomfortably. Most were walking on top of [the methamphetamine]. The attempt wasn't that clever.”

NZ Customs Drug Investigations Manager **Mark Day** comments on what might have been the give-away when a Malaysian tour group were caught smuggling \$10 million of methamphetamine into New Zealand in their shoes.

“Here it is, claiming it is trying to reduce the harm of alcohol in New Zealand by introducing reforms, and at the same time it is trying to interfere and stop Thailand doing the same. It is hypocrisy, it is just astonishing.”

Green MP **Sue Kedgley** is horrified at the government's attempts to stop Thailand introducing warning labels on alcoholic drinks, some imported from here. New Zealand is one of seven governments arguing in a World Trade Organisation document that labelling could mislead consumers and make them think even moderate drinking could lead to health problems.

“These children really do deserve better. Their parents should be cooking tea, not cooking P.”

Police Minister **Judith Collins** tells *The Southland Times* she is worried by reports about how many young children are growing up in clandestine methamphetamine (aka 'P') labs and tinnie houses.

“I think this is an entirely legitimate topic for debate.”

In a widely watched YouTube video, US President **Barack Obama** answers the question of whether the drug war may in fact be counterproductive. This isn't the resounding NO we would have expected from any of his recent predecessors. Obama then qualifies his remarks by adding, “I am not in favour of legalisation.”

organisational endorsements for the Count the Costs statement, which calls upon world leaders and UN agencies to quantify the unintended negative consequences of the current approach to drugs and assess the potential costs and benefits of alternative approaches.

This call is not an endorsement of any one policy position. Rather, it

“It is important to remember that the ‘war on drugs’ is a policy choice and that there are many alternatives available.”

highlights the need for reform and change if the costs that stem from current approaches are to be reduced. Acknowledging and systematically assessing these costs is the first step to informing the vital debate over future developments of drug policy and law.

It is important to remember that the ‘war on drugs’ is a policy choice and that there are many alternatives available. Supporters of Count the Costs have a range of often divergent views

regarding these alternatives. However, there is consensus on the following:

- The harms of current approaches can no longer remain unscrutinised by those responsible for them.
- Reform is needed.
- Alternatives need to be assessed and debated using the best possible evidence and analysis.

As well as bringing together resources that document the various costs of the ‘war on drugs’, resources will also be collected that examine how such costs can be most effectively monitored and evaluated and that provide evidence about the various alternative approaches where they have been considered. ■

**Steve Rolles** is a Senior Policy Analyst with the UK's Transform Drug Policy Foundation

## Finding out more

For more information (or to sign the Count the Costs statement), visit [www.countthecosts.org](http://www.countthecosts.org). You can also follow @CountTheCosts on Twitter







Global disasters dominated the news cycle in March, and a story that might otherwise have grabbed headlines slipped through largely unnoticed. But, says **Ben Youdan**, it's a story that may have monumental repercussions for New Zealand and reassert us as a leader on the world smokefree stage.

IN A move that will have the tobacco industry worried, the government has agreed to the goal of making New Zealand a smokefree nation by 2025. 'Smokefree' means getting tobacco consumption so low that its health impact is negligible.

“**The inquiry started out by seeing tobacco as a Māori problem. It ended up seeing tobacco as the industry's problem.**”

This is *the* most ambitious goal ever set for tackling tobacco use anywhere in the world, and it comes a full 15 years ahead of our nearest rival, Finland, which did grab global headlines last year by

announcing it planned to finish (sorry!) with tobacco by 2040.

In September 2009, it was announced that the Māori Affairs Select Committee would begin an inquiry into the tobacco industry in New Zealand and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori. What made this stand out was the shift from traditionally labelling tobacco as just a health issue, to focusing on the damage tobacco does to people and communities, Māori in particular.

The Select Committee received more than 2,000 written submissions from a wide range of people and organisations. As well as the usual health groups, there was a huge presence from whānau, iwi, community groups, school children, old and young smokers, scientists and community leaders, revealing to Select

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“Not only should New Zealanders be holding government to account on the smokefree goal, but the world will be doing so as well.”

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Committee members exactly what tobacco does to people. One stark reminder came through a kaumatua who turned up with a chilly bin containing his own heart, which he proceeded to hand around. His heart transplant had been needed because of smoking. The emotional stories complemented the hard science and the evidence presented to the Select Committee on actions required to fast-track smoking out of New Zealand.

The inquiry started out by seeing tobacco as a Māori problem. It ended up seeing tobacco as the industry's problem.

This level of support for the Select Committee from submitters and public debate in the media should make the government confident in aggressively pursuing the goal of a smokefree New Zealand by 2025. Progress has been given a kick-start with substantial and repeated tobacco tax increases, more funding of cessation treatment and current legislation to remove tobacco retail displays.

To date, both tax increases and the first reading of the retail display Bill have received an unprecedented 95 percent of Parliamentary votes in favour. In contrast, the 2003 vote to ban smoking in enclosed workplaces won 57 percent of the vote. This reflects just how much the public and policy makers have shifted in a few short years towards support for policies to reduce tobacco use.

With only 14 years to become smokefree, it is now vital that the tobacco control community is united on the steps to get there. The Select Committee and government have more than 40 recommended actions with varying levels of impact and achievability. It will be very easy to get distracted by the choice, and we must focus on those recommendations that will reduce smoking the most.

Traditionally, each tobacco policy change takes 2 to 5 years. With only 14 years to become smokefree, the pressure is on to be considerably more efficient in making these things happen. Measures such as reducing nicotine in cigarettes, eliminating additives that make smoking less harsh and controlling the supply of tobacco all need urgent research as there will need to be tangible policies around these issues in only a few short years.

Ultimately, every tobacco control advocate, researcher, health promoter and quit advisor should be able to reel off the steps that will take us to our smokefree goal: tax increases, display bans, plain packaging, supply control, mass media campaigns, quit support and tighter restrictions on the tobacco industry.

This September, the UN is hosting a global summit on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and heads of state will be reminded that tobacco is the most important and preventable cause of NCDs worldwide. They will also be urged by the global cancer, heart health and lung health communities to adopt a global goal of smokefree by 2040. New Zealand's own goal of 2025 will be an important example to the summit and one we hope our nation's leaders will be promoting. It's an opportunity to show leadership on the world stage and get support from the international community.

Even though the government's support for a smokefree New Zealand by 2025 did slip in quietly behind other world events, the fact is New Zealand has declared its great ambition to the world. We were one of the first to ban tobacco advertising and to make workplaces smokefree – policies that influenced and helped others to follow. Like then, the world will be watching progress here. Not only should New Zealanders be holding government to account on the smokefree goal, but the world will be doing so as well. ■

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**Ben Youdan is the Director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) New Zealand.**  
[www.ash.org.nz](http://www.ash.org.nz)

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# More cool to stay at school

Every year in New Zealand, well over 1,000 students are excluded from school (suspended or expelled), and the most common reasons include alcohol or other drug use.

**THE AVERAGE** age for a child to be excluded is 13.5 years and, of course, Māori and Pacific students are 63 percent more likely to be excluded than any other demographic.

An April 2011 paper by Regional Public Health, *When One Door Closes: Evidence-based solutions to improve outcomes and open new doors for students excluded or expelled from school in New Zealand*, says children who are excluded from school encounter many short- and long-term problems as a result. These include poor educational achievement, lower social wellbeing, health disparities, isolation from society and, unsurprisingly, increased likelihood of alcohol and other drug use.

Research is still going on, and perhaps more is needed, as to why so many students are excluded, but a likely contributing factor is that many schools feel they have no other alternatives, even while they concede exclusion will do the student little good in the long run.

However, a number of CAYAD (Community Action on Youth and Drugs) providers around the country are developing new programmes that may be the better alternatives many schools believe they lack.

## He Taumata Toa – Growing Champions, Wellington

He Taumata Toa – Growing Champions is a gym programme run by Consultancy Advocacy and Research Trust (CART) in Wellington. The programme was one of four that received funds from the Drug Foundation's *FebFast* held earlier this year.

“**There is a strong correlation between early school leavers and unemployment and/or lower incomes, which are, in turn, generally related to poverty and dependence on income support.**”

*Education Counts, Ministry of Education, 2010*

The gym, which targets disadvantaged Wellingtonians to help them overcome their drug problems, has been working with Wellington High School to provide a ‘stand-down’ alternative to exclusion for students caught with alcohol or other drugs.

Instead of being suspended or expelled, students are offered the opportunity to

engage in a restorative process that includes a family-school conference, counselling and the opportunity to attend the gym. Students choosing the gym go for at least 2 or 3 days. CART counsellors talk to them about why they take drugs and the lifetime consequences of drug use and help them think about setting better long-term goals.

But He Taumata Toa's emphasis is heavily on the gym programme, because getting them active and engaged in fitness activities like kick-boxing can work a whole lot better than words.

Gym trainer Dan Barrell said in *The Dominion Post* in April this year that a lot of the kids they see have been told they're nothing and that, with problems at home and drugs all around them, they don't know any better.

“But if they can find something they're good at, it gives them aspirations to achieve their goals.”

After their time at the gym, the students are allowed back to school, but many return to the gym daily or regularly to keep working on their fitness or their new-found chosen sport – and to continue being mentored by the trainers.

The programme, still in its pilot phase, has been running for about a year



and has been attended by about 15 Wellington High School students so far.

School Guidance Counsellor Kirsty Ferguson says the gym is an excellent resource and a good way of connecting with young people.

“In the end, schools have limited resources, and there’s only so much they can do, so it’s great to have an intervention that is community-based. After all, ‘it takes a village to raise a child’.”

There hasn’t yet been time for formal evaluation, and the programme is still evolving, but Kirsty says, so far, the anecdotal evidence is very good.

“The kids have all been really positive about the programme, and not one has reoffended. I think the positive role-modelling and the emphasis on physical fitness and goal-setting really fits with the school’s restorative process, which has a lot to do with building and restoring relationships.”

CART Manager Laurence O’Reilly says it’s also great for the trainers to see the kids react so well. He agrees that excluding kids from school is only going to make things worse.

“Sure, you need a deterrent, but we believe there are never any good outcomes from suspension and there has to be a better way, especially for the first offence.”

He says they’re continually working on improving the programme and that the long-term goal is to extend it to include any school in Wellington that wants to take part.

### Whole School Approach, Auckland

The Whole School Approach working group was established in September 2009 to help intermediate and high schools in Auckland find alternatives to expulsion and suspension for alcohol or other drug use.

The working group consists of a number of different agencies working together to promote a collaborative approach that focuses on students’ health and wellbeing.

“Stand-downs and suspensions should always be the last response after a range of other interventions have been tried and have failed to improve the situation.”

Ministry of Education, 2009

The approach is based on building a positive school culture, with strong leadership, and requires interventions that are evidence-based, multi-faceted and influence the student’s life as well as the school environment.

Members of the working group include Auckland City Truant and Alternative Education Services, Odyssey House, the Families Commission, the Mental Health Foundation, Auckland Council, the Ministries of Education and of Youth

Development and schools themselves.

Group Facilitator and Auckland CAYAD Project Co-ordinator Anna Jacob calls the project a “massive beast”, but she means that in a good way.

“Auckland is the largest CAYAD, with more than 80 schools in the area, and they all have unique needs and approaches, and while each body on the working group agrees that it’s important for students to remain in school, we all have different views on how that can best be achieved.

“The fact that we’ve continued to work so well together despite these differences and difficulties shows there’s a genuine shared commitment, and that’s a real success in itself,” she says.

Anna says a second challenge the group faces is gaining schools’ trust.

“One of the hardest things in working with schools to help them change their policies and environments is getting them to understand that we’re not here to interfere; that we really do have the best interests of the school, the students and their families at heart.

“It’s a long game for us, but we’re making progress, and more schools will come on board as we have more success.”

The working group has put together a literature review about good practice and the best ideas about alternatives to exclusion, and they have surveyed schools about what they think will work. Do they still have ‘zero-tolerance’ policies or are they exploring a more holistic





approach towards students with alcohol or other drug-related issues?

Anna reckons the literature review confirms the working group is on the right track in terms of the best evidence around the benefits of keeping kids at school, and the survey results show many schools are keen to explore alternatives to exclusion. She's feeling really positive, even though it's a long-term project and results will come further down the track.

In the meantime, schools are encouraged to contact the working group if they need support or expert advice, and the working group can also refer them to nearby services that are available to give support with alcohol or other drug-affected students.

"Watch this space!" Anna says.

### **More than Just a Policy, Nelson**

To help schools and other organisations deal with young people who have alcohol or other drug issues, Nelson-based CAYAD provider Health Action Trust has produced a new resource: *More Than Just a Policy: Best Practice Alcohol and Other Drug Policy for Youth Organisations – Guidelines*.

The guidelines provide best-practice information to help with decision making, and an accompanying workbook helps guide the process of developing new drug policy or reviewing existing policy.

Author Rosey Duncan, a health promoter working on the CAYAD contract, says there was a real need for a more

cohesive point of reference for the vast amount of information already available, and the resource was an attempt to pull it all together as a collection of best evidence and practice.

"One of CAYAD's objectives is to promote the adoption of effective policies and practices to reduce alcohol or other drug-related harm. At the moment, there is a real range amongst schools' drug policies – some are good and some aren't so good, and some schools don't have

“**There are so many variations in alcohol and other drug issues. These guidelines helped us to understand and start thinking about each of those and how we might manage them.**”

Gabrielle Thorpe, Manager,  
Abel Tasman Educational Trust, 2010

much in the way of policy at all. It's not even a requirement that they do.”

She says one of the main benefits of having sound, evidence-based alcohol and other drug policies in place is to improve consistency of responses and clarify expectations. Young people clearly understand behavioural requirements and consequences, and all staff know what to do when an incident occurs.

“Good policy reminds staff there are many factors to consider when dealing

with a young person on an alcohol or other drug-related matter. It also protects them. When there are no guidelines in place, they're vulnerable and could easily make a mistake that might hurt them professionally, especially regarding searches and drug testing.”

As they work through the workbook, school and youth organisations are encouraged to discuss and debate the issues and come to their own conclusions as to what will provide the best outcomes for young people. CAYAD workers can also support staff as they work through the process.

*More Than Just a Policy* was released in January this year and is being distributed throughout New Zealand.

An evaluation plan is being prepared for later in the year, once the resource becomes more widely used.

Rosey says it's a slow process, but they are already receiving positive feedback from organisations using the resource, and Health Action Trust is confident more schools and other organisations will come on board as awareness about it grows.

Health Action Trust hopes the resource will result in better policies that support more young people to remain engaged in their places of learning, experiencing a sense of belonging and support, which, in turn, means they will more likely achieve well later in life. ■

# Should ibogaine be an approved drug treatment?

Why ibogaine **should** be an approved drug treatment

▶ **IBOGAINE WAS** first popularised in the 60s by former heroin addict Howard Lotsof who found that, after just one dose, he had completely lost his craving for heroin without having to go through the typically brutal and potentially fatal withdrawal process.

Lotsof's experience has been repeated by many addicts, including some from New Zealand, who have been treated in clinics run by his followers in countries like Canada and the West Indies where its use is not illegal.

Those treated typically report a dreamlike phase lasting several hours followed by an intense and lucid introspective phase that can last for days. During this, subjects often say they are able to examine and understand the psychological and emotional reasons for their drug-taking. This is also when they typically notice the complete absence of withdrawal symptoms, which, for many, never return. Some are even surprised to experience a new and resolute determination never to return to drug use.

The theory is that ibogaine works by filling in opiate receptor sites, which ends cravings for the drug and effectively hits the reset button on the brain's neurotransmitter mechanisms. At the same time, the liver metabolises it into noribogaine, which is thought to have powerful detoxifying and anti-depressant properties. This further helps eliminate the pain and danger associated with withdrawal.

In the US, ibogaine is designated under Schedule 1 due to its "high potential for abuse or addiction and no known medicinal applications", but this is patently ridiculous.

Unlike other treatment substances such as methadone, ibogaine is in fact non-addictive and doesn't need to be taken on a continuing basis. Its effectiveness makes its medicinal value obvious, and it has virtually no abuse potential – it is incredibly expensive and comes with some unfortunate short-term side-effects such as heavy nausea. Even Timothy Leary said, "It'll never be a party drug."

Admittedly, clinical evidence for ibogaine's effectiveness in humans is a little patchy, but this is largely because pharmaceutical companies have routinely failed to get behind its research – concentrating instead on more profitable addiction maintenance drugs. Anecdotal evidence for its effectiveness is, however, overwhelming and cannot be disregarded.

Ibogaine works, it's natural and it's safe. Not one of the few deaths associated with its use has been caused by ibogaine itself. Each resulted from pre-existing medical conditions that are now rigorously screened for by those administering ibogaine treatment.

It is time to take this wonder drug out of the too-hard basket and approve it for more widespread use. If we consider the suffering of millions of addicts around the world – and of their loved ones – that could be completely overcome, not to do so would be a tragic sin of omission.



Ibogaine is a naturally occurring alkaloid of the *Tabernanthe iboga* plant, which is native to West Central Africa.

IT'S A powerful psychedelic that has been used medicinally and in religious ceremonies for centuries.

But now a growing network of doctors, researchers and activists – many of whom are active in ‘underground’ ibogaine treatment centres because its use is illegal in many countries – say this substance is the new wonder drug for treating opiate addiction. It may also be effective for addictions to alcohol and

nicotine and the treatment of obsessive compulsive disorders.

However, many medical professionals warn not enough is yet known about ibogaine to be sure the substance is safe and that its side-effects give more than enough cause for pause.

In this edition of Viewpoints, we provide the arguments for and against approving ibogaine as a treatment for addiction and withdrawal.

▶ **IBOGAINE HAS** been used to treat opioid addiction and withdrawal since the early 60s, and on the basis of anecdotal results alone, we'd have to agree its potential looks promising.

Unfortunately, however, ibogaine is an extremely powerful hallucinogen with some alarming and potent side-effects including neurotoxicity (body tremors, postural instability and ataxia), cardiac effects (reduced heart rate and blood pressure, and interruptions to the heart's electrical system), cardiotoxicity, nausea and vomiting. Studies have suggested there is a significant risk of brain damage associated with high dosages, and there have been at least 12 documented deaths linked to its ingestion.

Despite enthusiastic endorsement by many who have used it, these serious risks cannot be ignored, and the fact is, we just don't yet know enough about how the drug works to be sure its use is safe. No randomised controlled clinical trials in humans or long-term effectiveness studies have been published. Its proponents themselves are unable to provide much in the way of follow-up data, and even descriptions of ibogaine treatment procedures are sparse.

Ibogaine is not an approved drug in New Zealand, and its safety and effectiveness have not been evaluated by Medsafe. However, it was gazetted as a prescription medicine under the Medicines Act in 2010, which allows registered medical practitioners to prescribe unapproved medicines for the treatment of patients in their care.

Considering ibogaine's potential to do harm, medical professionals should be extremely cautious before using it as a treatment option until there is a robust body of knowledge about its effectiveness and safety in humans.

Ibogaine's day may come, but until we know more about it and how to use it safely, we are better off sticking with proven treatments. ■

Why ibogaine **should not** be an approved drug treatment



You decide

Should ibogaine be an approved drug treatment?

Vote online

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

# The fabulous FebFast

Nearly 900 New Zealanders pressed the pause button in February and went without alcohol for this country's first ever *FebFast* fundraiser. All up, it was a fantastic effort, and a total of \$107,714 was raised.

## STATISTICS

↘ 37%

FOUND IT EASY TO GIVE UP ALCOHOL FOR FEBFAST

↘ 56%

DID NOT MISS DRINKING

↘ \$107,714

RAISED

↘ 79%

PLAN TO DRINK ALCOHOL LESS OFTEN

**FEBFAST** challenges New Zealanders to give their wallet and body a break after Christmas by giving up the booze for a bit. At the same time, they can help raise funds for youth alcohol and drug services.

*FebFast* had 136 teams and 511 individuals taking part. Participants registered online at [www.febfast.org.nz](http://www.febfast.org.nz) and paid a \$25 registration fee. They could then create either a team or

individual fundraising page and personalise it by adding photos, a blog or even a video clip. Fundraising targets could be set, and friends and family visiting the page could donate and leave messages of support

On registration, FebFasters were asked what motivated them to participate. The most common responses were to support young people with substance use problems, improving health and regaining balance in drinking behaviours.

Four recipients were chosen to receive the funds raised:

- Amplify! Odyssey House – Auckland
- He Taumata Toa – Growing Champions – Wellington
- Adventure Therapy at Waipuna Trust – Christchurch
- Mirror Services – Dunedin.

Recipients played an active role by developing their online fundraising pages, being available for media opportunities and raising awareness about *FebFast* in their communities.

*FebFast* also had the support of several celebrity ambassadors from various fields including music, politics, cuisine, radio, theatre, the media and TV.

## FEBFAST RECIPIENTS



Ben Birks-Ang and Sandy Tito-Evans

### Amplify! Odyssey House, Auckland

Amplify! is an Odyssey House school-based intervention programme that uses youth-friendly techniques like song writing, dance and text messaging to help participants reach their potential and their goals. Developed in partnership with a number of organisations and launched 3 years ago, the programme is currently running in eight Auckland regional secondary schools.



Warren Doughty, Thomas Manunui, Laurence O'Reilly

### He Taumata Toa – Growing Champions, Wellington

The He Taumata Toa – Growing Champions programme was set up by the Consultancy Advocacy Research Trust, a charitable organisation established in 1989 to work with low-income Wellington families. The programme provides children and young people aged 4 to 17 free access to four structured activities: sports club, achievement gym, learn to swim and holiday programme.

## AMBASSADORS 2011

The ambassadors helped increase awareness and participation and gave the event some additional credibility and interest. They also helped stimulate public discussion around the role alcohol plays in our lives.

Those hesitant to participate because they had a special event happening in February, were able to buy date-stamped 'time out' passes for \$25 and enjoy their occasion guilt-free. However, participant determination meant only 36 time outs were purchased. One participant's opinion shared during the campaign was: *"I don't see the point of taking a time out... it seems to defeat the purpose of having the challenge of 28 days? It's more like two sets of 14-day challenges."*

Participants were invited to undertake an online research survey about their impressions during their fast. Results were very encouraging with participants enjoying the experience of going without alcohol for the month.

More than a third (37 percent) found it easy, and more than half (56 percent) did not miss drinking.

They also reported a number of benefits, with the most common being

saving money (69 percent), feeling healthier (57 percent) and losing weight (44 percent).

Most said they intended to consume less alcohol following their *FebFast* experience, and 79 percent said they planned to drink alcohol less often.

Almost all participants surveyed (98 percent) found the *FebFast* experience positive, and 90 percent said they want to take part again in 2012.

The *FebFast* concept of giving up alcohol for a month was innovative and simple yet sufficiently challenging. It achieved its objectives of raising awareness about alcohol issues, creating discussion, raising money for youth charities and achieving significant media coverage while providing personal benefits for those taking part.

The combination of participants achieving something that mattered to them while also raising money for charity proved very successful. As happened in Australia, *FebFast* can reasonably be expected to grow in numbers and fundraising dollars over the next few years because the work carried out in 2011 has set a good foundation. ■



### Pinky Agnew

Writer, actor, social commentator, speaker and celebrant

### Dr Jackie Blue

National List MP in Mt Roskill

### Jay-Jay Feeney and Dom Harvey

Radio hosts at The Edge

### Polly Gillespie

ZM Breakfast host, *Woman's Day* advice columnist

### Iain Lees-Galloway

Labour MP for Palmerston North

### Greer McDonald

Journalist, blogger, social media editor – Stuff.co.nz

### Mike McRoberts and

### Paula Penfold

TV3 journalists

### Bob Parker

Christchurch Mayor

### Maisey Rika

Singer/songwriter

### Jo Seagar

Chef, food writer and patron of NZ Hospice



Catherine Milburn, Jodi Apiata, Phil Siataga

### He Haerenga O Wananga – Adventure Therapy, Christchurch

He Haerenga O Wananga – Adventure Therapy, run by St John of God Waipuna Trust, is a Christchurch outdoor adventure programme that aims to develop young people's inner resilience and resources. With a focus on self-challenge and learning, it integrates outdoor adventure activities, such as mountain biking and abseiling, with group and individual sessions.



Deb Fraser

### Whakaata Tohu Tohu/Mirror Services, Dunedin

Whakaata Tohu Tohu/Mirror Services, established in 1991 by the Aroha Ki Te Tamariki Trust, provides a counselling service for children and young people from the greater Dunedin area who are affected by their or someone else's alcohol and drug use. It also provides a drug and alcohol day programme at Waitati for 13- to 17-year-olds who come from the Otago and Southland region.





## All's well that ends well



TEN members of the Armed Offenders Squad (AOS) stormed into the wrong house in New Plymouth, startling an elderly man who was minding his own business. They were searching for illegal firearms.

The officers promptly realised their mistake and comforted the occupier while one returned with a vacuum cleaner. The unit was cleaned and the broken windows fixed at the expense of the Police.

Once the AOS moved into the correct home, an identical unit nearby, Police discovered the firearms in the house were air rifles and fully legal.

However, a search of the premises uncovered some cannabis plants and a suspected illegal alcohol operation.

## Past cannabis use shows up in test



SMOKING a joint on the weekend could lead to a person being stripped of their driver's licence during the week.

Palmerston North drugged driver Christopher Scott learnt this lesson after failing a roadside impairment test and a subsequent blood test

after consuming cannabis 3 days earlier.

His inability to balance on one leg in front of Police, who suspected he was stoned, has left him \$1,000 out of pocket and banned from driving for 6 months.

Scott pleaded guilty to a charge of driving while impaired by drugs in the Palmerston North District Court. The 21-year-old was up front with Police and admitted smoking cannabis days earlier.

While blood tests found traces of cannabis in Scott's body, his lack of balance was due to an unstable ankle joint, defence lawyer Peter Coles told the Court.

"The initial roadside testing by Police – including balancing on one leg, touching your nose with both eyes closed and walking in a straight line – is entirely subjective."

## Trashed crash closes Westport pub

THE McManus Hotel in Westport had its licence cancelled for 24 hours after a "grossly intoxicated" woman left the hotel and crashed into two parked cars 100 metres away.

She was found to have excess breath alcohol of over 1,000 micrograms per litre of breath.

Westport Constable Sean Judd said the Buller District Council's Liquor Licensing Inspector and Police had started a joint initiative to address alcohol issues in the town.

He said West Coast Police have begun to focus on the causes of alcohol-related harm, since 70 percent of offending is alcohol-related.

"Part of that focus is to increase hotel compliance checks, which involves a more intensive assessment of how licensed premises are adhering to the Sale of Liquor Act 1989."

## Review calls for mandatory alcohol warnings



THE independent Food Labelling Law and Policy Review Committee has recommended mandatory warning messages about the risks of drinking while pregnant, labels on all alcohol and for the energy content of alcohol to be declared on labels.

The Committee was commissioned by the Trans-Tasman Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council to help reduce the incidence of foetal alcohol syndrome.

The Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (ALAC) welcomed the review, saying it was another step forward in women's health and that women needed to have the necessary information to make informed choices about harms related to any product they might consume during pregnancy.

"Not having this basic information displayed on the product sends a signal to women that alcohol mustn't be that much of a problem during pregnancy – a message that is contrary to both ALAC and official Ministry of Health

advice to avoid alcohol during that time," Dr Hearn of ALAC said.

"There is no known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy."

## High Court upholds Hamilton bar liquor ban

THE High Court has upheld a decision by the Liquor Licensing Authority not to renew the licence of a Hamilton bar that promoted speed drinking.

Waikato District Health Board Health Protection Advisor Ross Henderson welcomed the decision rejecting the appeal by Pie Lab owner Benjamin Henwood.

"This decision cements in place the ruling against the promotion of shots and speed drinking. Any bar that is promoting cheap shots is now on notice," Henderson said.

The Pie Lab appeared before the Authority in July to answer charges of selling alcohol to intoxicated people and selling a potent shot mix – The Pie Lab 151 – made with 75.5 percent Bacardi 151 and a "secret mix".

Investigators said they found "red spew" on the floor at least 10 times between July 2009 and July 2010 and a patron slumped at the bar in front of the bar's General Manager, Rey Estuye.

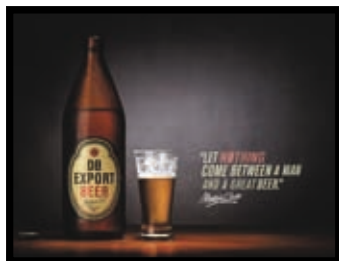
Mr Henderson said Waikato DHB opposed the renewal not only because of the condition of the premises but also the nature of the service.

"This was not a hospitality environment by any normal standards. As far as we were concerned, this is an abusive way of serving and consuming alcohol.

"This is not rocket science. If a customer vomits, it's because they're drunk and been served far too much alcohol.

"Unfortunately, vomiting is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to harm. We're just as worried about the non-consensual, drunken, unprotected sex and the violence."

### DB's BS



A "DISAPPOINTED" DB Breweries has withdrawn television and website ads after a complaint against one of its advertising campaigns was upheld by the Advertising Standards Complaints Board.

Progressive Party leader Jim Anderton complained the brewery's DB Export campaign wrongly used real footage from the 1951 waterfront lock-out riots to portray civil unrest after Labour Finance Minister Arnold Nordmeyer's 1958 'Black Budget' increased beer and tobacco prices.

"It is true that there was a negative public reaction to that Budget, but there were no riots, and to imply there were is misleading, deceptive and does not reflect our history with any accuracy," Mr Anderton said.

The Complaints Board agreed footage in the advertisements was misleading.

Mr Anderton said the brewery was also effectively warning politicians not to

regulate beer.

"The liquor industry seems to be making barbed threats with these advertisements, which, through its own admission, were planned during the same period when the Law Commission was looking at reforming liquor legislation and receiving public submissions on tighter controls over its advertising."

DB Export Marketing Manager Dave Shoemack said the claim of barbed threats was wrong and "a big assumption to draw".

"That's the furthest thing from our minds. It's not intended to affect politicians' decision making."

### Dog-harassing drunk bites off more than he can chew

A 39-YEAR-OLD National Park man suffered serious facial injuries during a drunken bout of dog-teasing. While partying at a friend's house, he held a large cross-bred dog down and tried to grab its tongue. The dog managed to break free and bit the man in the mouth.

He lost a lot of blood and was flown to Waikato Hospital, where he underwent cosmetic surgery to repair the wounds.

The dog was impounded overnight but then returned to its owner. Police said no charges would be laid.

### Daylight saving end confuses Wanaka boozers

STAFF at a popular Wanaka backpacker bar may have forgotten to turn their clocks back when daylight saving finished this year. Police said Mint Bar was still "pumping" with a crowd of about 70

patrons after 3am the following Sunday. Wanaka bars are only allowed to sell drinks until 2.30am.

Queenstown Police District Alcohol Harm Reduction Officer Keith Newell said the end of daylight saving at 3am meant all clocks should have been put back to 2am.

Although the bar may argue it was confused about daylight saving and its legal rights, Mr Newell said Mint was still trading after hours and there were people on the premises when Police officers arrived.

Senior Sergeant Alan Grindell, of Wanaka, said daylight saving had been in place for years and other bars were all closed on time.

### Drummer beats rap



AC/DC DRUMMER Phil Rudd, who pleaded guilty to cannabis possession in December 2010, has had his conviction quashed because it would have stopped him touring with the band.

The charge came after Police searched his launch, moored at Tauranga Bridge Marina and found 25g of cannabis onboard.

His lawyer argued that the consequences of a conviction outweighed the gravity of his crime and that a conviction would have a significant impact on his ability to travel overseas to pursue his professional life and other business interests.

Judge Alayne Wills agreed the evidence was clear that Rudd would have difficulty gaining entry to at least three countries the band normally travelled to, meaning the roles of other band members and other people who relied on him would also be compromised.

### King's boy's death has lessons for kids and parents

TEENAGERS need to know that drinking alcohol can kill them and parents have to know what to do if their children are intoxicated, says Coroner Gordon Matenga.

He made the comment while ruling on the death of 16-year-old Auckland's King's College student James Webster, who died in May 2010 after sculling Jagermeister and vodka at a birthday party.

His blood alcohol level was found to be nearly five times that of the legal driving limit.

"Teenagers should be aware that drinking 250ml or more of spirits over a short period of time (30 to 60 minutes) will cause you to become drunk very quickly to the point of unconsciousness," Matenga said.

"This will endanger your life. Do not do this, and look out for your mates and do not let them do it."

Webster family spokesman Donald Webster said they were disappointed Matenga had not said more on the perils of teenage binge drinking.

"He does mention that alcohol can kill, and that's accepted of course, but I think the message needed to be made a bit more dramatically and a bit clearer to our kids." ■



## Slingshot pot



**SHOWING** epic creativity and resourcefulness, Mexican drug smugglers have used a catapult to fire drugs over the border into Arizona. However, they would have had more success had they not let themselves be spotted by US National Guard troops operating a remote video surveillance system.

Mexican authorities swooped on the operation, but the smugglers fled in a Humvee, leaving behind the catapult, more than 20kg of marijuana and an SUV.

The catapult was powered with elastic and was mounted on a trailer.

"I have not seen anything like that in my time as a Border Patrol agent... although we are trained to handle any kind of threat that comes over that border," Tucson Sector Border Patrol Spokesman David Jimarez said.

## British Government to scrap reliance on drugs committee

**MINISTERS** in Britain will no longer be required to seek the advice of scientists when making drug classifications under new government proposals.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill contains an amendment that would remove the requirement on the Home Secretary to appoint at least six scientists to the Advisory Council on

the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).

A further amendment to the Misuse of Drugs Act would allow the Home Secretary to place temporary controls on substances for a year.

Imran Khan, Director of the Campaign for Science and Engineering, said, "It's incredible the government is trying to take us back to the time of 'Minister knows best'. Scrapping the need for expertise on drugs advice is not only bad science, it's also terrible politics."

## Global Commission on Drug Policy launched

A **NEW** Global Commission on Drug Policy, launched in January in Geneva, wants to promote informed, science-based discussion about humane and effective ways to reduce the harm caused by drugs at an international level.

The Commission will aim to build on the successful experience of the Latin American Commission convened by former presidents Cardoso of Brazil, Gaviria of Colombia and Zedillo of Mexico in 2009.

Persuaded that the association between the drug trade, violence and corruption threatened democracy, the Latin American Commission reviewed the current 'war on drugs' policies and opened a public debate on the issue. This led to the publication in February 2009 of its statement, *Drugs and Democracy: Toward a Paradigm Shift*, which argued that prohibitionist policies based on eradicating production, disrupting drug flows and criminalisation of consumption have not yielded desired results.

## More booze outlets, more violence

**AN AUSTRALIAN** study suggests more neighbourhood pubs and liquor stores could increase violence in homes.

To see if access to alcohol influenced rates of violence in the home, researchers at the Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Center in Victoria monitored changes in the numbers of alcohol outlets and Police-recorded cases of domestic violence between 1996 and 2005 in 186 Melbourne neighbourhoods.

After accounting for poverty in each neighbourhood, violence rates were found to be about 6 percent higher per 1,000 residents for each additional hotel or pub. For outlets that only sold alcohol for drinking on site, the increase was 2 percent.

Most strikingly, adding one liquor store per 1,000 residents in a neighbourhood was linked to a nearly 30 percent increase in the rate of local domestic violence per 1,000 residents. In other words, adding three new liquor stores to a neighbourhood of 1,000 people might be accompanied by four additional domestic violence incidents in that neighbourhood.

## Call for Aussie MPs to be drug tested



A New South Wales election candidate has called for politicians and bureaucrats to

undergo regular drug testing amid claims that drug use in Parliament is common.

The call follows charges brought against Education Minister Verity Firth's husband Matthew Chesher for buying an ecstasy tablet from an alleged Sydney drug dealer.

Chesher immediately quit his job as Chief of Staff to Roads Minister David Borger following his arrest, with Ms Firth admitting her husband had made "a very big mistake".

Darren Marton, an independent Upper House candidate in the March election, said he wanted politicians and bureaucrats to be tested to set an example to young people.

"There's no question about it. Anyone would be naive and have their head buried in the sand if they think people in Parliament don't engage in illicit drug use – they do," he said.

Mr Marton, an outspoken anti-drugs campaigner since 2005, said anyone returning a positive test in the first instance should be offered counselling. A second positive test could lead to dismissal.

## First Lady says Obama now smokefree

**PRESIDENT** Barack Obama has finally kicked smoking, First Lady Michelle Obama has revealed.

"Yes, he has; it's been almost a year," she told reporters at the White House when asked whether her husband had finally done what millions of Americans cannot seem to do.

"He's always wanted to stop," she said, explaining that daughters Malia and Sasha are getting to an age where he wants to be able to



look them in the face and deny it should they decide to ask him whether he smokes.

The issue of Obama's smoking last surfaced in December 2010, when Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said he had not seen Obama smoke in 9 months. That would have put Obama's final puffs somewhere in March 2010.

Mrs Obama said she was very proud of her husband, but that she has not pressed him for details.

"I haven't really poked and prodded him on this. When somebody's doing the right thing, you don't mess with them."

### Thai government warned not to repeat history



LOCAL and international human rights groups have warned about possible widespread abuses of vulnerable people if Thai authorities go through with plans to round up suspected drug users.

The International Harm Reduction Association and Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group say the plan is particularly worrying in light of the 2003 'war on drugs' that claimed about 2,500 lives and saw thousands placed in detention without legal protection.

Authorities at the time insisted the killings were carried out by crime syndicates of drug users and

dealers out of fear they would be implicated. Although few believe this official line, little has been done to bring to light what actually had happened during the controversial campaign. Evidence and testimonies documented in various reports implicate the authorities for these extra-judiciary killings.

In a letter to the Thai Government, the organisations wrote, "These plans for mass detention and forced treatment raise considerable human rights concerns, especially given Thailand's history of nationwide punitive and ineffective anti-drug campaigns..."

"This crackdown flies in the face of Thailand's 2002 policy, which states that people who use drugs should be treated as patients, not criminals. There is nothing therapeutic about rounding up thousands of drug users and forcing them into military boot camps that fail to provide appropriate services and support."

### Conflict over liquor sachets in Malawi

A FEW years ago, a variety of small plastic sachets containing 40 percent spirits were introduced to the market in a number of African countries. Their sale is causing considerable problems in countries like Malawi, particularly among the young and the poor, wrote Dag Endal on the Alcohol Drugs and Development website in March 2011.

The result has been a public outcry and political discussions around ways to address the problem.

Endal says encouraging political moves aimed at banning the sale of the plastic sachets have been stalled in the Courts. Governments and NGOs have their hands tied by an injunction while the liquor continues being sold to minors through legal and illegal channels.

The headmaster of Livuzu Secondary School, Mrs Simbota, said the alcohol was negatively affecting the quality of Malawi's education system.

"Students sip them during lessons as they are small and easy to hide."

The sachets are an attempt by the alcohol beverage industry to find new market segments and to recruit new consumers, writes Endal.

"The price of such a sachet may be as low as 10 Malawian kwacha in the most extreme cases. This is equivalent to 7-8 US cents, which, even for a poor Malawian, is a low price."

### 'Glassy-eyed' driver blames blow job



A KENTUCKY man arrested for driving under the influence has blamed his erratic driving on the oral sex he was receiving at the time.

Jason Kircher was pulled over after being clocked at 66mph in a 55mph zone. The attending officer spotted an open alcohol container in the car and noted Kircher's "glassy eyes" before subjecting

him to a series of sobriety tests – all of which he failed.

However, his blood alcohol level was found to be 0.054, under the legal limit of 0.08.

Drivers can still be charged in Kentucky if they are under the limit if there is other evidence of impairment. Kircher was charged with operating a vehicle under the influence, careless driving and speeding.

Passenger Jessica Talarovich was charged with public intoxication and possession of an open alcoholic container.

### Tipsy toddler lawsuit



THE parents of a Michigan toddler accidentally served alcohol at an Applebee's restaurant have sued the chain's parent company, saying its employees have made similar mistakes with other children.

Taylor Dill-Reese and Dominic Wilson, the parents of 15-month-old Dominic Lacey Wilson, claim they suffered emotional distress as a result of the incident and seek monetary damages for medical bills and non-economic losses.

The meal they ordered for Dominic Jr was supposed to come with apple juice, but the boy apparently got a margarita mix with alcohol in it instead. They say he drank it and began exhibiting "grossly inappropriate" behaviour.

When the child was taken to hospital, he was found to have a blood alcohol content of 0.10 – above Michigan’s drunk-driving limit of 0.08. He also suffered “headaches, nausea” and other classic hangover symptoms.

The couple’s attorney said this was not the first mix-up involving alcohol and children at an Applebee’s restaurant and that the situation would have been tragic if the child had ingested a little more.

Applebee’s parent, California-based DineEquity Inc, said there were “discrepancies” between some of the claims in the lawsuit and information the company had obtained, but that it would begin to serve apple juice only from single-serve containers and would retrain its staff about storing alcohol in separate and identified containers.

### Christopher Kennedy Lawford appointed Goodwill Ambassador



**RENOWNED** actor and author Christopher Kennedy Lawford, who appeared in the New Zealand film *The World’s Fastest Indian*, has been appointed Goodwill Ambassador for Drug Dependence Treatment and Care at the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Kennedy Lawford spent much of his early life

struggling with drug and alcohol addiction but says he was fortunate enough to have access to good treatment services that helped him recover.

Introducing Kennedy Lawford at a news conference during the annual session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov said, “We all talk at length about the real and incredibly difficult challenges of people hooked on substances. Mr Kennedy Lawford knows first-hand how it feels, and his journey and experience as an actor, author and advocate show us that there is a way out and that treatment and care can work.”

Upon his appointment, Kennedy Lawford said, “I want to use my experience and advocacy to bring a message of hope and empowerment to those affected by drug use and dependence throughout the world.”

### Plaudits for secondary supply law

**THE** Australian Drug Foundation has commended the Victorian Government for protecting children from alcohol harm by introducing a secondary supply law making it illegal to give a child alcohol on private property without parental permission.

“This law protects the health and safety of Victorian children by reducing underage drinking. We want people to think twice and ask themselves: Is it okay to give this child alcohol?” said Australian Drug Foundation CEO John Rogerson in a 21 March media release.

“It’s hard to believe that,

even now, it is legal for anyone to give any amount of alcohol to a child of any age without their parent’s consent.”

Secondary supply laws are already in place in New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland. The Foundation says it hopes the Victorian Government’s initiative will encourage other governments to step up and follow suit.

### High-profile Las Vegas drug prosecutor busted for buying crack

**THE** attorney who prosecuted Paris Hilton after her cocaine arrest last year and who recently took on singer Bruno Mars for possession has himself been arrested.

David Charles Schubert, 47, faces a criminal investigation after Police allegedly caught him buying crack cocaine through a street dealer who claimed Schubert buys \$40 of cocaine three or four times a week.

District Attorney David Roger said, “I just can’t wrap my head around the idea that a prosecutor who knows the dangers of drugs would try crack cocaine.”

### Floridian users may lose welfare

**NEW ZEALAND IS** not the only country considering drug tests for beneficiaries. Under new legislation being considered by the House Judiciary Committee, Florida’s welfare recipients would need to pass drug tests – and pay for them – before receiving financial assistance.

Recipients would be denied benefits for at least a year if they failed a drug test. A second failed test would remove them from assistance rolls for 3 years.

Backers say this will send a tough message to substance abusers who use taxpayer money to feed their addictions instead of their families and that it may provide the incentive for them to seek help.

But critics say subjecting all recipients to drug tests penalises their families, especially their children, regardless of whether the parents are using.

About 113,000 Floridians who are receiving temporary cash payments under a programme administered by the Department of Children and Families could be affected.

### Florida also cracks down on state employees

**FLORIDA** Governor Rick Scott has ordered each of his agencies to amend their drug-testing policies to require quarterly random testing of the existing workforce and pre-employment drug screening for all job applicants. The tests could cost the state \$35 each, adding US\$3.5 million to the existing deficit and potentially affecting 100,000 people.

“Floridians deserve to know that those in public service, whose salaries are paid with taxpayer dollars, are part of a drug-free workplace. Just as it is appropriate to screen those seeking taxpayer assistance, it is also appropriate to screen government employees,” Scott said.

The drug testing does not include independent constitutional agencies and cabinet members. The legislature and state court system are also exempt, causing disagreement among state officials. ■

# Can you have too much of a feel-good thing?

It's estimated more than 164,000 adult New Zealanders have tried ecstasy at some point in their lives, and around 67,000 have used it in the last year. It's clearly a popular feel-good drug, but surely something that makes you feel so good must be bad for you?

**RESEARCHERS** have struggled to answer the question of how harmful ecstasy is for more than a decade, and recently, two pieces of seemingly contradictory research have gained international media attention. In February, *The Guardian* ran the headline "Ecstasy does not wreck the mind, study claims" and reported that previous research claiming it does was flawed.

In that story, Professor Halpern of Harvard Medical School explains that the major failing of previous studies is that they don't compare apples with apples. Ecstasy researchers usually compare the cognitive abilities of users with a group of non-users. However, ecstasy users are prone to all-night dancing, sleep deprivation and dehydration – factors that themselves might impair the brain. To overcome this, Professor Halpern compared two groups of avid dance party enthusiasts – some that used ecstasy and some that did not.

This study was published in the journal *Addiction*, where the authors report that ecstasy-using ravers performed equally well as did ecstasy-free ravers on all but one of 15 different measures of cognitive performance. They explain that previous studies that found ecstasy users were cognitively impaired were likely measuring the impact of drug use combined with the dance party culture and that ecstasy use itself may not be as damaging as previously thought. The authors stop short of concluding their results prove ecstasy is harmless. Rather, they say their findings "indicate that the neurotoxicity of human ecstasy use remains incompletely resolved".

The following month, *The LA Times* reported that research had confirmed

"greater brain risks from 'real-world' ecstasy use". This story described an Australian study where researchers tagged along at house parties and monitored ecstasy users in the act. The aim was to capture a snapshot of ecstasy use in the 'real world' rather than in the artificial environment of a laboratory.

It is well understood that ecstasy users tend to use other drugs and that ecstasy pills can contain any number of different substances. In an effort to see how dangerous ecstasy use really is, this study documented how ecstasy is used, in what doses, what substances are present in ecstasy pills and how much of these substances end up in the bloodstream of users during the course of the night.

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“The authors stop short of concluding their results prove ecstasy is harmless.”

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This study was also published in *Addiction*. The authors reported some very interesting results, including that more than a dozen participants took doses so high that they have never been observed in laboratory research. Several participants took amounts of ecstasy understood to be lethal according to laboratory guidelines. Participants often took several pills over the course of the evening, and though the pills usually did contain methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA, the intended ingredient in ecstasy), many contained other substances. Participants also liked to combine their ecstasy with other drugs, mainly alcohol and tobacco. But despite the apparently extreme

doses taken and risky combination drug use, none of the participants suffered any adverse effects.

The Australian research demonstrated that recreational ecstasy use is an entirely different beast to ecstasy use in a controlled laboratory environment and that what we understand about ecstasy from laboratory experiments may not be so applicable to recreational ecstasy users.

And far from confirming how dangerous ecstasy use is, the Australian study could be interpreted as quite the opposite. Recreational users appear to take far more ecstasy than was expected, seemingly without any immediate negative effects, and according to Professor Halpern's research, ecstasy users' cognitive abilities are not affected.

Another study published in *Addiction* this year examined what factors increased or decreased the adverse effects of ecstasy for recreational users. The authors reported that ecstasy users sometimes experienced negative effects like paranoia, poor general health, irritability, confusion and moodiness. The more ecstasy taken over the user's lifetime, the more likely they were to experience negative effects. However, these effects faded over time with periods of abstinence.

So, while the researchers keep at it, Mythbusters will continue to advise that there is little conclusive evidence about the long-term effects of ecstasy use and whether the harm that use can cause is permanent or not. Limited evidence suggests that ecstasy use can cause some damage to parts of the brain. Stay safe. ■

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For a full list of references, visit [www.drugfoundation.org.nz/mythbusters](http://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/mythbusters)

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That's what makes it so powerful, so destructive for me, because that becomes more important than my relationship to me.

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