



## Law Commission report – Decriminalised drug use one step closer

The release today of the Law Commission's report on controlling and regulating drug use signals that New Zealand is moving ever closer to decriminalised use of illicit drugs according to MethCon Group director Mike Sabin.

"This review of the Misuse of Drugs Act (MODA) is a positive move but of significant concern to me is that the flavour of this report is very much toward regulating illegal drug use and possession of this rather than preventing it and halting it where it is occurring."

Mr Sabin said that the "more flexible approaches" being suggested in the report are in line with the decriminalised possession of drugs for personal use as seen in Portugal in recent years which has led to increased cannabis use and increases in the overall numbers of drug users.

"Yet again another government body are completely missing the relationship between the drug user and the drug dealer – one does not exist without the other. By creating laws and regulations that apply minimal or no deterrence and accountability to using and possessing drugs we are providing the ideal breeding ground to increase the overall number of people who will be using drugs, therefore more drug dealers" claimed Mr Sabin.

Mr Sabin said that drug use is no more than a social contagion that is fuelled by the susceptibility of the individual and the amount of drug taking behaviour they are exposed to.

"The majority of the recommendations in the report ignore the fact that by attempting to regulate drug use in the manner of Portugal we are failing to prevent drug use or stop it quickly once it has started and in practice will be perceived by the citizen on the street that drug use is not in fact illegal at all" said Mr. Sabin.

The report also reflects on the fact that the prevailing policy focus of harm minimisation is not adequately reflected in the MODA as it stands and this appears to be the driving force behind many of the recommendations which amount to accepting drug use inevitable and less harmful use as the primary goal.

“Harm minimisation has failed us miserably in terms of our drug policy in the last 15 to 20 years, of late seeing us rise to be the highest users of cannabis and methamphetamine in the world. How on earth entrenching this nonsense into our laws on drugs is likely to improve the situation is beyond me” said Mr. Sabin

“The irony is that the same people who extol the virtues of regulation verse prohibition for illicit drugs are the same people who criticise heavily the way in which alcohol controls and regulations fail to address that problem. Surely applying this logic, why on earth would we want to jump out of the frying pan and into the fire to go from a model that is struggling to one that is clearly failing” said Mr. Sabin.

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(NZ's only specialist methamphetamine education providers)

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