

2nd July 2008



Protecting People & Profits
Through Education

New Zealand 'dopier' than Most

New Zealand ranking second only to the United States for cannabis use provides further evidence that our country is descending into the worlds gutters, according to Methcon Group director Mike Sabin

A recent study using data from 17 countries participating in the World Health Organisation's world mental health survey has identified that cannabis use was the highest in the United States at 42.4%, closely followed by New Zealand at 41.9%. "This is something we should be gravely concerned about", said Mr. Sabin.

"The reality is, that when young people try illegal drugs for the first time, the odds are that they are trying cannabis, but of more significance the association of early cannabis use with addiction to other 'harder' drugs, is something we ignore at our peril", said Mr. Sabin

"For far too long cannabis has been a 'blind spot' in our society, with romantic notions carried over from the 1960s and 1970s characterising cannabis as a 'soft, or relatively harmless, drug. This view was not accurate in the past, and it is certainly not true today with the potency of present day cannabis 4 or 5 times what it was", claimed Mr. Sabin

It is now well accepted that cannabis is addictive and that it can induce compulsive drug-seeking behaviour and psychological withdrawal symptoms with some recent studies identifying that cannabis users between the ages of 12 and 17 displaying the characteristics for abuse or dependency, now surpassing alcohol and tobacco.

"This is a particular hazard to young people, who have been shown to be the most vulnerable to the detrimental effects of cannabis on their health because their brains are still developing, something brought to prominence recently with seizures of the drug in New Zealand schools and reinforced by this survey which showed that by the age of 15, over 27% of New Zealand youth were using cannabis", said Mr. Sabin.

"In my opinion the high rates of cannabis use in New Zealand has directly contributed to our 'worlds worst' status with methamphetamine, and when you consider that our per head consumption of alcohol is also extremely high, it's clear we are becoming one of the worlds 'black sheep'", said Mr. Sabin.

We can't continue to ignore the evidence. Violent crime and anti-social behaviour, child abuse, domestic violence, mental illness and drug seizure rates are all saying one thing; we need to act, and act now.

Mike Sabin
Managing Director
Methcon Group Ltd (NZ's only specialist methamphetamine education providers)
