

## P is now endemic - change of approach required:

An admission by Police Minister Annette King in April this year that "authorities are struggling to win the war against P" is echoed in the most recent Illicit Drug Monitoring Survey, released today according to MethCon Group director Mike Sabin.

"What this research reflects is a transition from an epidemic to an endemic problem over the past few years, with more frequent users needing medical, legal and counselling assistance, with availability remaining easy or very easy and purity and price remaining stable," said Mr. Sabin.

"Massey's Centre for Social Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation also found there was some increase in the use of other stimulants such as Ritalin and Ecstasy, some of which could be related to legal changes in the BZP market, all of which indicate a less than healthy appetite for potent uppers in this country," claimed Mr. Sabin.

"Just as concerning, the price and potency of cannabis appears to be increasing, as does the use of opiates such as heroin, a drug often used to 'come down' from methamphetamine binges."

"Having studied the progression of methamphetamine patterns in other countries, it is clear we have mirrored common trends where the real socio-economic consequences follow a number of years after the problem reaches epidemic levels. More people need help financially, emotionally and legally and the lack of coordinated response in these areas typically sees the troubles perpetuated." Mr. Sabin said.

"With the highest levels of importation seizures and discoveries of meth labs in 2006, trends noted in arrestee drug monitoring surveys and the findings of the BERL research looking at the social harm that year, it is clear we now have an entrenched problem that requires a robust, multi-level, coordinated approach beyond what is currently in place, to address it." Said Mr. Sabin

"The best indicator of successfully reducing the prevalence of methamphetamine is a lowering of quality, the raising of its price and reducing availability, none of which have been present in the last three years according to this and a number of other research studies," said Mr. Sabin.

"In short, the real problems are now coming home to roost and we have to accept that the Police will never fix this problem on their own and focusing on criminal consequences alone is flawed. A far more balanced approach to drug use is required and nothing short of this is likely to see any change with this endemic problem." Said Mr. Sabin

In late May Mr. Sabin presented a research paper 'Solutions to the Methamphetamine Crisis in New Zealand' to a Law and Order Select Committee, which looks at what works and what doesn't in solving drug problems and outlines a number of recommendations to address the problem here.

The research can be found at: <http://www.methcon.co.nz/press/research.pdf>

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