

Millie Elder's case highlights failings in the New Zealand justice system:

The court case and subsequent conviction of Millie Elder serves to highlight the dismal failings of our current justice system to meet the challenges brought about by New Zealand's rampant methamphetamine addiction according to MethCon Group director Mike Sabin.

"Go to any Court in the land and the inadequacies of our justice system with regard to methamphetamine abuse become glaringly obvious" said Mr. Sabin, "it is like a revolving door which is spinning off its hinges because we are failing to address what drives their crime - which is addiction" he said.

The number of drug apprehensions for hard drugs in New Zealand has doubled since 2001 with methamphetamine related cases now comprising 54% of all cases sent to the High Court, up from 41%, many of which are repeat offenders blinded to the criminal consequences of their actions by the grip of addiction.

"I have been studying the phenomenal success of the Drug Treatment Court models first implemented in the United States almost 30 years ago and their results speak for themselves said Mr. Sabin"

Drug Treatment Courts follow a treatment model rather than an adversarial one, and mandate drug afflicted arrestees into robust treatment programmes which are strictly overseen by a team of treatment specialists and also Police and probation services, to ensure compliance with the programmes.

"The recidivism rates plummet from as high as 60% for non treated arrestees to as low as 5% for those in the Drug Treatment Court programmes, with successful Drug Court graduates, also avoiding a criminal conviction and being diverted" said Mr. Sabin.

"The models have shown that for every dollar spent in Drug Treatment Courts up to seven dollars can be saved in incarceration and other associated criminal justice costs, let alone the cost to the lives of victims of crime" claimed Mr. Sabin.

"Drug courts have been called the most significant criminal justice initiative in the last century, and we have one of the worst meth problems in the world and no Drug Treatment Courts to deal with it. It's just appalling, given the extent of our problem, and it needs to change" according to Mr. Sabin.

"Millie's case is nothing unique, or special, it's just another one of thousands, but it highlights that whether rich or poor, opportunities or not, we are failing to address what will keep those Court doors spinning and our communities reeling"

(Mr. Sabin will soon be releasing a research paper which examines the importance of demand side interventions in the battle against meth in New Zealand)

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