



**dapaanz**

fostering excellence in addiction practice

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## **Provisional Support for Government Amendment of Misuse of Drugs Act**

Dapaanz, the Addiction Practitioners' Association, is supportive of a government bill allowing Police to divert people with drug addiction problems to treatment rather than prosecute them.

However, it wants the practice monitored to ensure discretion is applied equally across all groups in society, especially Maori, and it also wants more resources for treatment options to ensure the move is effective.

A Bill to amend the Misuse of Drugs Act that would specify in law that Police should use their discretion when deciding whether or not to prosecute people with addiction problem was introduced into the House by the Minister for Police, Hon. Stuart Nash, this afternoon.

“Addiction practitioners commend the Minister for his brave, compassionate, health based approach to people with addiction problems, “says the Executive Director of Dapaanz (Addiction Practitioners' Association Aotearoa New Zealand), Sue Paton.

“He’s on the right track but we are currently unable to meet the needs of the people already seeking treatment.

There are also likely to be people with mild to moderate addiction issues who would benefit greatly from early intervention. But the resources just aren’t there, “she says.

“We also need to keep a close eye on how police apply diversion to ensure that Māori, in particular, receive the same benefits as non-Māori. Historically this has not been the case.

Today’s announcement that police are developing training to enable officers to successfully implement the changes is an opportunity to ensure police address this historical inequality.

It’s another commendable initiative that, I hope, will prevent any unconscious bias against Māori with addiction problems who come to the attention of police.”

Ms Paton says that with appropriate support people with addictions can and do recover.

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