



03.05.2019

Amendments to Outdated Misuse of Drugs Act a Necessary First Step

Health professionals working directly with people affected by addiction are adamant that proposed amendments to the outdated Misuse of Drugs Act (1975), are necessary first steps towards drastically improving the health of drug users, diverting them from incarceration toward recovery and increasing the overall security of everyone in the community.

“Addiction practitioners know from our own experience that a punitive approach to drug addiction does not work, says the Executive Director of the Addiction Practitioners’ Association Aotearoa New Zealand (DAPAANZ), Sue Paton.

“What does work is to adequately fund addiction practitioners and specialist health services,” she says.

“This extremely valuable and important work results in positive outcomes for individuals, families/whānau, and their communities.

It has a dramatic impact on the wellbeing of communities by helping people at the hard end of addiction turn their antisocial behaviour into prosocial behaviour, which not only reduces health, justice and welfare costs, but dramatically improves family and community wellbeing.

“Research also shows that the majority of people in long term recovery from drug and alcohol abuse are twice as likely as Joe Citizen to be actively engaged in voluntary good works in the community. They are the people you want living next door - compassionate, law abiding, contributing members of society. Surely, that is the outcome we are all aiming for,” Ms Paton says.

“The experience of health professionals and people working in justice systems of countries like Portugal, the Netherlands and Norway supports a health approach to the treatment of people affected by the misuse of drugs and alcohol.

“Yet here in New Zealand overdosing on both legal and illegal substances has become a massive public health issue. That alone is a good reason to support the proposed amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act as a first step to a comprehensive overhaul of drug legislation.

Deaths relating to synthetic drugs alone have skyrocketed (latest figures suggest up to 65 deaths since July 2017).

“If road deaths or industrial accidents had increased at the same rate it would be regarded as a public health crisis, Ms Paton says.

“In order to eliminate all drug related deaths, both legal and illegal, we need to stop vilifying those that use them and encourage them to seek help.”

For further information please contact:

Sue Paton, 04 282 1809 / 021 187 4311 sue@dapaanz.org.nz

Pamela Fleming 0274575677 fleming.pamela@gmail.com

Dapaanz - Fostering Excellence in Addiction Practice

[website](http://www.dapaanz.org.nz) | www.dapaanz.org.nz | [twitter](https://twitter.com/dapaanz) | www.twitter.com/dapaanz | [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/dapaanz) |