



# The *new* face of Big Tobacco

Say NO to Big Marijuana in New Zealand

Same corporates.  
Same objectives.  
Same addiction.  
New product.



## THE LAW MATTERS

Pro-drug groups make two erroneous claims. "It's a health issue, not a criminal issue" and "The war on drugs has failed."

## PREVENTION MATTERS

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in its 2012 report; "*Cannabis prevention efforts are critical because cannabis is often the first illegal drug used by youth. Preventing substance use before it begins not only makes common sense, it is also cost-effective. For every dollar invested in prevention, a savings of up to \$10 in treatment can be realised.*"



The currently illegal status of drugs is an inhibitor which deters people from participating. While there will be some who are enticed by the illegality, most people do not like engagement with criminal behaviour or with criminal distribution networks. A 2001 study of 18-29 y/o's by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research revealed that 29% of those who had never used cannabis cited its illegality as the reason. Furthermore, 91% of those currently using cannabis weekly or more said they would consider using more if it were legal.

*"The War on Drugs is Lost' is an unimaginative and fundamentally stupid ...metaphor which exerts a baleful effect on proper thought... If the war against drugs is lost, then so are the wars against theft, speeding, incest, fraud, rape, murder, arson, and illegal parking. Few, if any, such wars are winnable."*

Theodore Dalrymple - *Romancing Opiates: Pharmacological Lies and the Addiction Bureaucracy*

## LAW + HEALTH = WELLBEING

Nobody would claim that we apprehend too many drunk drivers or thieves - even though we spend money and effort on roadside checks and policing. The government also has a responsibility to keep the public safe from harm, including from dangerous substances. If those with addictions commit serious offences, as does happen, the criminal law cannot simply turn a blind eye. The community needs to be protected.

**The law has an important deterrent effect. Most people don't want to break the law. It sends an important societal message.**

## LOCKING 'EM UP?

Part of the 'health' argument is based on the myth that 'petty' marijuana users are filling our prisons. But statistics obtained from the Ministry of Justice under the Official Information Act show that **in the last three years only 16 people in total have been given a prison or home detention sentence for cannabis possession offences**, and that even these sentences may be 'influenced by their previous offending history'. It will be difficult to meet somebody who says they've been behind bars for smoking a joint, and that's their only crime.



International studies have shown that most are imprisoned for *drug-related* offences, that is, crimes committed while *on* drugs (murder, armed robbery, theft, assault, child abuse, etc.) or crimes committed in order to *obtain* drugs.

Erroneous claims that we are wasting time and resources focusing on the criminal aspect fail to understand that there has been a substantial decline in arrests for cannabis use in New Zealand over the past decade, and that police diversion and Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment (AODT) Courts have been increasingly used. Diversion and pre-charge warnings are also being used sensibly and effectively. In the 20 years to 2014, the number of arrests for cannabis per 100,000 head of population dropped by 70%.

*“The NZ Drug Foundation argues it’s a complete waste of ‘hundreds of thousands of police hours’ trying to enforce the law, criminalising and imprisoning Kiwis for low-level possession... 42% of front-line police officer hours are consumed on dealing to family violence. If you apply the extreme, absurd and self-serving logic of the legalise lobby, the police should surrender to family violence too, because so many Kiwis are indulging in this sick and twisted national sport. Ditto for child abuse, tax evasion, drink-driving, shop-lifting, or any other social scourge you care to name.”*

Broadcaster and commentator Mike Yardley



**A smart arrest policy can provide both a societal stamp of disapproval and an opportunity to intervene and stop the progression of use.** Keeping marijuana illegal through an appropriate application of the laws which cater for ‘youthful indiscretions’ and which focus on supply / dealers is as much a public safety policy as it is a public health policy.

**Drug dealers and other criminals who derive huge profits from the drug trade will not cease criminal activity in the face of legalisation.** The costs of regulating and then policing that industry will only compound the costs of policing the illegal market, as seen in Colorado.

*“It is a well-intentioned fallacy that drug users want “help”. What they want is supply, and they’ll pretend to want help to get it. Others will on-sell their ration, probably to under 18s, to help fund their harder drug use. We live in the real world. I think...”*

NZ columnist Rosemary McLeod

## COERCION OF THE LAW

It is significant to note that Portugal (trumpeted as the model of drug laws by drug lobbyists in NZ) **coerces** treatment and rehabilitation. We should reject the notion that coerced treatment (aided by legal sanction) is unworkable or unacceptable for drug users.

## A SENSIBLE DRUG POLICY FOR NZ

A sensible drug policy should recognise three pillars, similar to the successful approach towards *SmokeFree NZ*:

- **supply reduction** – target the dealers and suppliers
- **demand reduction** – promote a drug-free culture
- **harm reduction** – ensure addiction services & support are available for those who genuinely want to quit. The primary purpose is not to keep users using, but reduce and help them exit drug use.

**It’s not about a ‘war’; it’s a defence of our brains.**

We don’t need an army, machine guns, informants, or patrols. We need a “Stay Drug-Free” message. We should continue fighting drugs and the devastation its use causes on the users, their families, and society in general. It’s about enforcing drug laws to protect families.

**It is working for tobacco.**

*“Why do nations schedule drugs? ..... Nations schedule psychoactive drugs because we revere this three-pound organ (of our brain) differently than any other part of our body. It is the repository of our humanity. It is the place that enables us to write poetry and to do theatre, to conjure up calculus and send rockets to Pluto three billion miles away, and to create iPhones and 3D computer printing. And that is the magnificence of the human brain. Drugs can influence [the brain] adversely. So, this is not a war on drugs – this is a defence of our brains, the ultimate source of humanity.”*

Dr Bertha Madras, Professor of Addiction Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School



For additional information, including source references:  
[SayNopeToDope.org.nz/the-law-matters](http://SayNopeToDope.org.nz/the-law-matters)

*Correct as at time of printing. We welcome any documented corrections.*