



NEW ZEALAND
NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE BUREAU
JOINT OPERATION OF CUSTOMS, HEALTH & POLICE

30 March 2017

David Johnston
Fyi-request-5277-eec22137@request.fyi.org.nz

Subject: OIA – Suspected drug transit or source countries in the wider South Pacific region

Dear Mr Johnston

I acknowledge receipt of your Official Information Act request received by the New Zealand Police on 26 January 2017.

Your request was for the following information:

“Could you please provide, and high level/analysis documents created in the last three years, either created by the police, or used by the police, regarding the common availability (or lack of) of cannabis and methamphetamine?”

On the 9 of February you were advised that Police requires an extension of time in which to respond to your request, pursuant to section 15A (1) of the Official Information Act 1982, because the request necessitates a search through a large quantity of information and consultations such that a proper response to the request cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

On the same date an email was sent nationally to Police District Intelligence Managers requesting documents relating to you OIA.

After collating the responses it was determined that there is no single high level documents that have been developed by Police that meets the terms of your OIA. Police are aware that anecdotal noting's of availability are generated in the Districts. Your request relates to the high level analysis. The NDIB's function is to provide authoritative intelligence and advice on illicit drugs, as such we are providing extracts from general strategic documents that discuss cannabis and methamphetamine availability.

With regards to the second part of your question; or documents used by Police. New Zealand Police may consult a vast number of sources which are publicly available if appropriate such as:

- The Ministry of Health's Drug Use Survey
- The Illicit Drug Monitoring System and the New Zealand Arrestee Drug Use Monitoring reporting published by Massey University's SHORE Research Centre.
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



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2013 – General Methamphetamine Document

- In comparison to 2011, the quantity of methamphetamine seized in 2012 decreased by 76.4%. This is the lowest since 2003. However, the number of seizures decreased by only 9.2%. Quantity can thus fluctuate significantly between years, irrespective of the number of seizures.

The methamphetamine market in New Zealand remains entrenched and continues to be a mainstay of the criminal economy.

- The current shortage of iodine and hypophosphorous is likely to result in increased attempts at importing finished methamphetamine, involving international criminal syndicates. It is likely methamphetamine will increasingly be sourced online, and will therefore become available in new locations to new offenders.

Consumption and users of methamphetamine

In general, indicators from usage data are mixed, and show a likely drop in prevalence by new users, but continued consumption by acute and heavy users. The following is a summary of the consumption and usage data from various studies and data within New Zealand.

- The **New Zealand Health Household Survey** indicated that consumption of amphetamines-group substances in the working age population has halved from 2.1% in 2007-2008 to 0.9% in 2011 (or about 25,000 New Zealanders). Past-year amphetamine use was highest among persons aged 25 to 34 years (1.9%) and higher for men (1.3%) than women (0.5%).
- In the **NZADUM** survey, 44% percent of the police detainees had tried methamphetamine in their lifetimes, 28% had used it in the past year and 16% had used it in the past month. There was no statistically significant change in the lifetime prevalence of methamphetamine use over the past three years. Detainees in Auckland Central were more likely to have recently used methamphetamine than those in Wellington Central (38% vs. 22%) and Christchurch Central (38% vs. 21%).
- The **2012 IDMS** indicates that 64% of the frequent methamphetamine users were male in 2012. The proportion of frequent methamphetamine users who were of Maori ethnicity increased from 22% in 2006 to 39% in 2012. There was little change in the level of methamphetamine injecting in the last seven years, with 33% of frequent methamphetamine users injecting methamphetamine in 2012. In 2012, 66% of the frequent methamphetamine users were unemployed or on a sickness benefit.
- **Offence statistics** show that 1,319 offenders were convicted for methamphetamine offences in 2012. Of these, 421 (or 31.9%) had previous methamphetamine convictions and 160 (or 12.1%) had previously been charged but not convicted. This indicates recidivism is still high with regards to methamphetamine use and other methamphetamine offences. This recidivism



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shows there are still many opportunities for treatment, or research into effective intervention strategies for methamphetamine addiction.

Availability of methamphetamine

Methamphetamine continues to be widely available, particularly within the upper North Island.

- Fifty-eight percent of 2012 methamphetamine seizures were in Auckland, and 72% were in the upper North Island. These figures are consistent with previous years. The availability of methamphetamine increased in Christchurch Central from 2011 to 2012 in the IDMS, a possible reflection of NZAGs increasingly targeting the South Island market.
- IDMS data reports that frequent drug users perceive that the availability of methamphetamine is 'stable/easier over the last six month period in 2012, with no statistical difference in the perception of change in availability of methamphetamine from 2006 to 2012 (most said it was 'stable').
- The NZADUM also found no change in the current availability of methamphetamine from 2010 to 2012. Detainees reported the current availability of methamphetamine to be 'very easy/easy' in 2012. There were also reports of a sharp increase in the availability of crystal (imported) methamphetamine, and some decline in its price, from 2011 to 2012. See 'Emerging Trends' for more on imported methamphetamine.

2013 General Cannabis Document

The characteristics of cannabis supply and distribution in New Zealand

Analysis of the 2012 IDMS results showed that 86% of frequent drug users had purchased cannabis from a 'private house' and 46% had purchased from a 'tinnie house' (known as Drug Dealing House). Purchases of cannabis via the internet were also noted.

The IDMS also asks frequent drug users who they purchased their cannabis from in the past six months. In 2012, 63% purchased cannabis from a drug dealer, which was a significant increase compared to 2011 where 45% had purchased from a drug dealer. An increase (although not statistically significant) was also noted in the percentage of users purchasing cannabis from a known gang member or associate, up from 21% in 2011 to 27% in 2012. It is possible this is indicative of an increase in distribution by gang members and associates; however it may just be that users are more aware of dealings with them or that they are dealing in a more overt manner.

2014 General Methamphetamine Document

Imported methamphetamine

New Zealand continues to domestically manufacture methamphetamine, but there has been an increase in importations of finished methamphetamine across the border. It is likely that this is due to a decreased availability of reagents (iodine and hypophosphorous). Similar to precursor imports, methamphetamine imports tend to be conducted and/or received by relatively low level players and therefore the organisers are less at risk of facing the consequences if the courier or package is intercepted.



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In 2013 large seizures of methamphetamine were exported from South Africa, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Phillipines, Cameroon and People's Republic of China. Syndicates continue to employ a wide range of modus operandi, from human couriers to concealments within mail items and unaccompanied luggage.

Methamphetamine consumption and use remains high in New Zealand. The following is a summary of the consumption and usage data from various studies and data within New Zealand.

- The Global Drug Survey (2014) had a sample of 5,731 New Zealand participants, with 4.9% of them indicating they had used an amphetamine-type stimulant in the last 12 months.
- In the 2013 New Zealand Arrestee Drug Use Monitoring System (NZADUM) survey, 50% percent of the police detainees had tried methamphetamine in their lifetimes, 30% had used it in the past year and 19% had used it in the past month. There was no statistically significant change in the lifetime prevalence of methamphetamine use over the past three years. Detainees in Auckland Central were more likely to have recently used methamphetamine than those in Christchurch Central (38% vs. 25%) and Whangarei (38% vs. 25%).
- The 2013 Illicit Drug Monitoring System (IDMS) survey indicates that 67% of the frequent methamphetamine users in 2013 were male. The proportion of frequent methamphetamine users who were of Māori ethnicity increased from 22% in 2006 to 43% in 2013. In 2013, 60% of the frequent methamphetamine users were unemployed or on a sickness benefit.
- Offence statistics show that 1,246 offenders were convicted for methamphetamine offences in 2013. Of these, 447 (or 35.9%) had previous methamphetamine convictions and 151 (or 12.1%) had previously been charged but not convicted. This indicates recidivism is still high with regards to methamphetamine use and other methamphetamine offences. This recidivism shows there are still many opportunities for treatment, or research into effective intervention strategies for methamphetamine addiction.

Continued availability of methamphetamine

Methamphetamine continues to be widely available, particularly within the upper North Island. However, the South Island market is expanding and as a result methamphetamine is becoming more available.

- Of methamphetamine seized by Police, 92% of the total quantity seized during 2013 was made in the Auckland and Waikato regions (Waitematā, Auckland and Counties Manukāu and Waikato Districts), which accounted for 14.2 kilograms of methamphetamine.
- In Christchurch Central, 67% of IDMS participants rated the current availability as being either 'easy/very easy', however this was only based off 31 respondents. IDMS data reports that frequent drug users perceive that the availability of methamphetamine was 'stable' over the last six month period in 2013.
- The NZADUM found that in 2013 the availability of methamphetamine was 'very easy/easy'. Detainees reported no change in the availability of methamphetamine from 2010 to 2013.



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- Data from the IDMS indicates frequent drug users paid a median price of a \$100 for a point (0.1 gram), \$700 for a gram and \$14,000 for an ounce (28 grams). IDMS data also indicates that the average price paid for a gram of methamphetamine in Christchurch (\$984) is far more expensive than that paid in Wellington (\$773) and Auckland (\$588). It is almost certain that availability is the key factor influencing pricing in the different regions. It is also likely that pricing is influenced by distance from source of manufacturing. Further to this, it is likely these prices will continue to attract New Zealand Adult Gangs (NZAG) to distribute methamphetamine down to the South Island.

2014 General Cannabis Document

Cannabis is the most widely-used illicit drug in New Zealand and is almost exclusively supplied by domestically cultivated cannabis. Supply and demand is entrenched and is unlikely to significantly change. This is more evident in certain districts around the country, particularly in Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Eastern Districts. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report that Oceania (Australia and New Zealand has one of the highest prevalence rates of cannabis use (11%), per capita, in the world.

2015 General Methamphetamine Document

Methamphetamine seizures increased significantly from 2013, almost tripling to 96.39 kilograms. The purity of methamphetamine remains high (approximately 75%), pricing at the supply level has decreased, large quantities are available, and demand for product remains firmly in place. The size of the market suggests a considerably wider use and range of users than traditionally considered. The majority of methamphetamine was seized at the border (78.14 kilograms). Source countries varied depending on the quantities being imported. By quantity, the following countries dominated (in order): Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR, and Peoples Republic of China (China). However, Canada and USA accounted for the largest number of seizures of small quantities, coming through the International Mail Centre, which are almost certainly indicative of Silk Road or dark Net purchases.

2015 General Cannabis Document

150,448 plants were eradicated in 2014, which was a slight increase in comparison to 2013. However, the quantity of head/leaf seized significantly decreased, by 192 kilograms, compared with 2013 seizures. The National Cannabis and Crime Operation (NCCO) run by Police continues to account for the majority (84%) of total plants eradicated; the 2014/15 Operation JASMIN resulted in the eradication of 126,110 plants and 72 kilograms of head/leaf.

2016 General Methamphetamine Document

Methamphetamine seizures in New Zealand continue to increase. In 2015, 341.93 kilograms of methamphetamine was seized domestically and at the border, almost four times the amount seized in 2014 (98.79 kilograms).

The majority of methamphetamine was seized at the border (289.51 kilograms vs. 78.14 kilograms in 2014). By kilogram, the Peoples Republic of China, Mexico and Hong Kong were the top countries for export of methamphetamine. Note, this does not necessarily imply the methamphetamine originated from these countries.



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2016 General Cannabis Document

The demand for cannabis in New Zealand remains strong and it is unlikely to significantly change. Intelligence suggests that cannabis is becoming less available, particularly in regions away from main growing areas. It is possible that this is driven by the success of NCCO. However the increased availability and preference for methamphetamine could be another contributing factor. Anecdotal reporting indicates that the quality of cannabis head in tinnies has decreased, which may suggest that cannabis is becoming rarer and cultivators are subsequently using all possible parts of the plant to for sale.

If you are not satisfied with my response to your request you have the right to complain to the Office of the Ombudsmen and seek an investigation and review of my decision.

Yours faithfully

John O'Keeffe
Coordinator: National Drug Intelligence Bureau