

M.1. Reform developments outside of Europe

New Zealand

Reference

M.B. Webb, 'New Zealand's national drug policy', in *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 1999, 18, p. 435 – 440.

Commentary

Michael Webb was the former project leader for the national drug policy at the New Zealand Ministry of Health. At present, he is Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Victoria in Canada.

The article describes the origin, development and key features of New Zealand's national drug policy (NDP). The Ministry of Health published this policy plan. It establishes the strategic direction of the national drug policy for a period of five years (1998 – 2003), and sets out explicitly for the first time the Government's commitment to minimise drug-related harm.

One can find the entire National Drug Policy plan of New Zealand on the internet: Ministry of Health, *National Drug Policy, A National Drug Policy for New Zealand 1998 – 2003*, Ministry of Health, Wellington, New Zealand, 1998, 50 p. URL: [moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/7004be0c19a98f8a4c25692e007bf833/3d31996cabb14acf4c25666f003aee1f/\\$FILE/drugalc.pdf](http://moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/7004be0c19a98f8a4c25692e007bf833/3d31996cabb14acf4c25666f003aee1f/$FILE/drugalc.pdf)

Abstract

The overall goal of the National Drug Policy is to minimize harm caused by illicit and other drug use to both individuals and the community. Underpinning this goal are five principles, being efficiency, equity, use of both harm prevention and harm reduction strategies; upholding of individual rights where these do not unreasonably impinge on the rights of others; and ensuring the needs of Maori are addressed by enabling development of specific strategies acceptable to Maori.

Despite the fact that the achievements of the first twelve months of the New Zealand's National Drug Policy have been modest, the policy is an intersectoral policy that provides a framework for government agencies and NGO's to work together towards a common goal. In this respect, at the symbolic level, the most important achievement thus far has been to 'lock in' harm minimization as the organising philosophy behind all drug-related efforts by public sector agencies.