

Manurewa Local Board submission on the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill

1. The Manurewa Local Board is the statutory body that represents the communities of Manurewa, Wattle Downs, Weymouth, Clendon, Wiri, Totara Heights, The Gardens, Randwick Park, and parts of Alfriston. It is one of 21 local boards that sits within Auckland Council. The board promotes the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of current and future communities in the local board area.
2. More than 82,000 people live in the Manurewa Local Board area. 43 per cent are aged 25 years and under, with 12 per cent aged 60 and over. The population is ethnically diverse, with 37 per cent European, 33 per cent Pacific Peoples, 25 per cent Maori, and 20 per cent Asian.
3. The board supports the classification of synthetic cannabinoids AMB-FUBINACA and 5F-ADB as Class A drugs. We have consistently advocated for and supported measures to impose harsher sentences on those involved in selling and supplying synthetic cannabis. The Drug Foundation has reported that more than 50 deaths since mid-2017 can be linked to synthetic cannabis use. This classification will empower the the police and customs to keep these drugs off our streets.
4. The board also supports the proposed introduction of temporary class drug orders. These will increase the ability of the police and medical practitioners to react quickly to the introduction of new, potentially harmful substances into our communities. In the past, the rapid pace of change in creating new drugs has hampered efforts to control their distribution. This measure will go some way to allowing the authorities to adapt to that pace of change and allow for better control of new drugs as they emerge.
5. The board opposes the proposed amendments regarding the use of police discretion over when to prosecute for drug possession. Although this discretion is already available to police, we are concerned that explicitly stating in legislation that the option to prosecute should not be used “unless it is required in the public interest” will create a situation where prosecution for drug offence is the exception rather than the rule.
6. In our view, this would be a de facto decriminalisation of all drugs. Such a change in focus for drug enforcement has the potential for significant long-term consequences for our community. We are concerned that this change is being made without sufficient public discussion, and without the necessary infrastructure to support it.
7. This amendment has the potential to create resourcing issues for both our police and the health system. The board is concerned this amendment would

place police officers in the position of making decisions that should be made by health professionals, deciding whether a drug user is a recreational user or an addict in need of medical treatment. This will require both training and resourcing, and will increase officers' workload. We are also concerned that this amendment would place a large burden on the health system due to the increase in drug addiction treatment that would be required.

8. The board does not wish to make an oral submission the select committee.



Angela Dalton, Chairperson

11 April 2019

On behalf of the Manurewa Local Board