

E. Oceania

1. Major developments

668. Oceania is the only region in which seizures of all the main types of drugs (amphetamine-type stimulants, cannabis, opiates and cocaine) have recently increased. Largely driven by significant increases in Australia, those increases are partly attributable to improvements in law enforcement and perhaps to greater efforts by organized criminal groups to access the illicit drug market in Australia.

669. The proximity of the Pacific islands to major illicit markets for amphetamine-type stimulants and routes used for trafficking in other types of drugs makes that subregion particularly susceptible to drug abuse and trafficking. While cannabis, the most prevalent drug in Oceania, continues to be smuggled into and within the region, large quantities of cocaine have been seized in Australia over the past few years. Lured by the huge profits to be made in those illicit markets, methamphetamine and its precursor chemicals are also smuggled through the region.

670. Drug monitoring systems are relatively underdeveloped in all countries in Oceania except Australia and New Zealand. In addition, the collection of data on amphetamine-type stimulants is hindered by a lack of drug testing equipment and forensic facilities.

671. There continues to be a lack of reliable and up-to-date drug-related data for most countries in Oceania, especially the Pacific island States, which makes a comprehensive assessment and understanding of the regional situation difficult. The Board notes that even some of those States that have adhered to international drug control conventions, such as Fiji, Micronesia (Federated States of) and Papua New Guinea, fail to comply with their reporting obligations under the treaties. In a region where increasing seizures and trafficking have been reported over the recent years, the collection and compilation of drug-related data is of particular importance. There is a need for all Governments, including the authorities of non-metropolitan territories in that region, to improve the collection of drug-related data and to comply with their reporting obligations under the international drug control treaties.

672. Over the past few years, an illicit market for new psychoactive substances has rapidly developed, presenting serious challenges to law enforcement authorities in Oceania, which are being addressed by authorities of Australia and New Zealand. Such substances have a short

production cycle and can be quickly distributed through the Internet. The ability of the authorities to curb the illicit trade in such substances and control the spread of their abuse has been weakened further by complications involved in testing such substances for analogues. The illicit market for new psychoactive substances continues to grow, as traffickers make use of loopholes in existing legal systems and market such substances as “legal” substitutes for controlled substances. Closer monitoring, proactive initiatives by the relevant authorities and better collaboration among law enforcement agencies within the region, as well as international action, are required to reverse the growing trend.

2. Regional cooperation

673. A “declaration of partnership” was signed by the Board of Management of the Pacific Transnational Crime Network in February 2013. The declaration commits the members of the Network to sharing with other members information on their efforts to reduce transnational organized crime. Both Australia and New Zealand continue to provide technical support to other countries in Oceania. During a drug identification course conducted by New Zealand authorities at the headquarters of the Tonga Defence Services, in Nuku’alofa, in March 2013, the topics discussed included drug trafficking in the Pacific, methods of concealment, presumptive field test kits, the changing situation in the Pacific and the impact of methamphetamine. To facilitate the exchange of information and better cooperation within Oceania, annual meetings of drug control authorities and other competent national authorities were held in different countries.

3. National legislation, policy and action

674. In response to challenges presented by new psychoactive substances in New Zealand, a psychoactive substance act, which prohibits the sale of all psychoactive substances unless approved by a regulator, was adopted in July 2013. According to the act, manufacturers or importers of such substances must prove that the products in question do not pose undue harm. As a result, the onus of proof lies with the manufacturers and retailers and not with the authorities. Those who violate the new legislation shall be subject to prosecution and substantial penalties—up to 10,000 New Zealand dollars for an individual and \$NZ 50,000 for a body corporate.

675. Since May 2012, when the Government of Australia included synthetic cannabinoids in the standard for the

uniform scheduling of medicines and poisons, various states in the country (New South Wales, Northern Territory, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia) have followed suit. Other recent initiatives launched by the Government have focused on raising the awareness of youth regarding the harm associated with illicit drug use and on promoting services for the treatment of drug and alcohol abuse among vulnerable populations.

4. Cultivation, production, manufacture and trafficking

(a) Narcotic drugs

676. The illicit cannabis markets in countries in Oceania continue to be supplied by domestic production—there is little evidence of large-scale smuggling of cannabis between countries in the region. While cannabis continues to be illicitly cultivated both indoors and outdoors in Oceania, because of the favourable climate the majority of cannabis plants eradicated in the region had been illicitly cultivated on outdoor sites. In 2011, illicitly cultivated cannabis plants were eradicated on 2,131 outdoor sites in New Zealand, the third largest number in the world.

677. Recent data suggest that there has been a moderate increase in cannabis seizures in both Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, the amount of cannabis seized rose by 34.8 per cent, to 5,452 kg, in the financial year 2011/12,²⁵ reaching the third highest level reported in the preceding 10-year period. In New Zealand, the amount of cannabis seized increased to 693 kg in 2012. Given the relatively well-established illicit markets for cannabis in both countries, the situation is unlikely to change significantly.

678. Oceania is one of the regions in which cocaine trafficking has only recently become significant. The total amount of cocaine seized in Oceania rose from 290 kg in 2009 to 1.8 tons in 2011. That sharp increase is largely attributable to the increase in cocaine seizures in Australia. The routes used for cocaine trafficking in Australia are becoming more diverse. In addition to the main countries used as transit countries by cocaine traffickers, Canada has been identified as a transit country used for smuggling significant quantities of cocaine into Australia.

679. In New Zealand, despite occasional spikes registered in cocaine seizures, the total amount of cocaine

seized each year is usually relatively small (less than 5 kg per year in the period 1980-2010). In 2012, however, about 16 kg of cocaine was seized in the country, much more than in the previous year (0.615 kg). With the cocaine market in Australia expanding, it is possible that the illicit supply of cocaine in that country could also be used to supply the illicit market in New Zealand.

680. Australia continues to be an attractive country of destination for heroin consignments. The estimated street price of heroin in the country is between 228 and 300 Australian dollars per gram. In the financial year 2011/12, 388 kg of heroin was seized in Australia, slightly more than the amount seized in the previous year (376 kg). The majority of the heroin seized in Australia originated in Afghanistan and Myanmar. In recent years, heroin has entered Australia from about 20 different countries, the most prominent being Malaysia, followed by Pakistan, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Singapore. Several heroin seizures have been reported in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. As there is limited illicit demand for heroin in the Pacific island countries, vigilance is needed to ensure that those countries do not become a trans-shipment area.

(b) Psychotropic substances

681. The illicit markets for amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA) in Australia and New Zealand are mainly supplied by domestic manufacture, although some imports of such stimulants have been recorded. The large amounts of precursors seized in Australia over the past few years suggest a considerable amount of amphetamine-type stimulants is being illicitly manufactured in the country. Some illicit manufacture of such stimulants has also been detected in the Pacific island countries since 2004.

682. In Australia, seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA) increased significantly in the financial year 2011/12, reaching a total of 347 kg, compared with 105 kg in the financial year 2010/11. In terms of the number of consignments of amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA) detected at the Australian border, the most prominent points of embarkation of the detected consignments were in India, followed by Hong Kong, China; and China's mainland. In terms of the total weight of the detected consignments, the most prominent point of embarkation was in Mexico.

683. The price, purity level and availability of methamphetamine on the illicit market in New Zealand seem to have remained stable, despite the Government's increased

²⁵In Australia, the financial year begins on 1 July and ends the following year on 30 June.

efforts to counter methamphetamine trafficking over the past few years. In 2012, the total amount of amphetamine seized in New Zealand rose to 133.4 kg (up from 2.7 kg in 2011), but the total amount of methamphetamine seized declined to 6.9 kg (from 33.8 kg in 2011). The range of groups involved in transnational organized crime in New Zealand has increased.

684. In the financial year 2011/12, 12 kg of MDMA was detected at the Australian border. The most prominent points of embarkation of the detected consignments were in the Netherlands, followed by Canada and New Zealand; consignments from those countries accounted for 89 per cent of the total weight of MDMA detected at the Australian border. MDMA remains in short supply in Australia, but global manufacture of the substance is expected to rise as alternative precursor chemicals become more available.

685. Although the total number of MDMA (“ecstasy”) tablets seized in New Zealand in 2011 nearly tripled (128,897 tablets), the number of such tablets seized at that country’s border showed a significant drop. Thus, the increase in the number of MDMA (“ecstasy”) tablets seized in New Zealand in 2011 was mainly attributable to an increase in the illicit production of such tablets within that country. In 2012, the total number of MDMA (“ecstasy”) tablets seized in New Zealand increased to 173,715, largely as a result of the dismantlement in August 2012 of a criminal ring that had been responsible for most of the illicit manufacture and distribution of MDMA tablets in the country.

(c) Precursors

686. With the smuggling of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in bulk and in preparation forms, considerable amounts of methamphetamine continues to be illicitly manufactured in Oceania. The importation of pseudoephedrine in the form of a pharmaceutical preparation from China continues to pose significant challenges to competent national authorities in the region, particularly in Australia and New Zealand.

687. In Australia, a very large number of clandestine drug manufacturing laboratories (809) were detected in the financial year 2011/12, the majority of which had been illicitly manufacturing methamphetamine; they were mainly small laboratories located in residential areas. A total of 109 clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing laboratories were dismantled by the New Zealand authorities in 2011, three of those laboratories had also been illicitly manufacturing MDMA

(“ecstasy”) and *gamma*-butyrolactone (GBL). Although the amount of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine seized in New Zealand has continued to drop, there has been no indication that the availability of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine has changed.

(d) Substances not under international control

688. Countries in Oceania, which have some of the highest prevalence rates in the world, seem to have been hit particularly hard by the emergence of new psychoactive substances. In the first half of 2012, 44 new psychoactive substances were identified in the region, accounting for more than 25 per cent of all new psychoactive substances identified worldwide in that period. The emergence of new psychoactive substances, together with other non-controlled substances more commonly used in the western Pacific (such as kava which is often used in combination with alcohol), presents new challenges to existing legal systems and law enforcement and health authorities in the region.

689. Fast growth in the manufacture and use of new psychoactive substances has been observed in both Australia and New Zealand for the past few years. In New Zealand, which had been dominated by the spread of piperazines prior to the period 2007-2008, the demand for synthetic cannabinoids has replaced the demand for piperazines. Similarly, in Australia, synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones, in particular mephedrone (4-methylmethcathinone), have attracted significant public attention. During the first six months of 2012, Australian authorities identified 33 new psychoactive substances, the majority of which were synthetic cathinones and phenethylamines. A recent survey suggested that the widespread use of synthetic cannabinoids stemmed from the misconception that they were legal to buy, regardless of the changes in national legislation.

5. Abuse and treatment

690. Cannabis continues to be the most prevalent drug in Oceania. In 2011, the annual prevalence of cannabis use in the region was estimated at 10.9 per cent of the population aged 15-64 which is much higher than the global average (3.9 per cent). The prevalence of cannabis use has been estimated to be 10.6 per cent in Australia and 14.6 per cent in New Zealand. Although relevant quantitative data are lacking for most of the other countries in the region, national experts have indicated that cannabis use is also widespread in some Pacific island countries.

691. The prevalence of the abuse of opioids in 2011 was estimated to be 3.0 per cent in Oceania—3.4 per cent in Australia and 1.1 per cent in New Zealand. In Australia, drug abuse surveys have indicated that the proportion of recent heroin abusers have remained relatively stable. While similar stability has also been registered for New Zealand, methadone and morphine are the opioids most commonly abused by persons who abuse drugs by injection.

692. There has been a global decline in the abuse of MDMA (“ecstasy”). In 2011, Oceania remained the region with the highest prevalence of abuse of MDMA (“ecstasy”) (2.9 per cent). Decreases in the abuse of MDMA (“ecstasy”) among police detainees were recorded in Australia: only 5 per cent of police detainees reported having abused the substance in 2010 and 2011, half the percentage reported in 2009. In New Zealand, MDMA-type drugs are now one of the most widely abused drugs—second only to cannabis; since a number of other illicit drugs, such as *N*-benzylpiperazine (BZP), mephedrone and 4-methyl-*N*-ethylcathinone, are commonly used as a substitute for MDMA and marketed as “ecstasy”, the “ecstasy” in New Zealand is likely to contain not MDMA but illicit drugs with effects similar to those of MDMA.

693. The abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA), in particular crystalline methamphetamine and methamphetamine, has long been a matter of concern in the region. The prevalence of abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants was reported to be 2.1 per cent in Australia (in 2010) and New Zealand (in 2008). Both of those countries have devoted significant resources to tackling the problem. In New Zealand, Tackling Methamphetamine: an Action Plan has been in place since 2009. For many of the Pacific island countries, however, lack of resources and quantitative data has made it difficult to curb such abuse.

694. Increases in the abuse of cocaine have been noted in Oceania. In 2011, the annual prevalence of cocaine abuse in the region was estimated to be 1.5 per cent. In Australia, the prevalence of cocaine abuse was 2.1 per cent

in 2010—twice the rate in that country in 2004 (1.0 per cent) and five times the global average (0.4 per cent). High prices for cocaine have made the illicit market for cocaine in Australia attractive to organized criminal groups, but those high prices have also helped to keep the actual consumption of cocaine low—despite the high prevalence of cocaine abuse in the country. That is reflected in, inter alia, the low demand for treatment related to cocaine abuse in Australia, as well as in the fact that the levels of cocaine and benzoylecgonine, the main cocaine metabolite, detected in wastewater analysis in Australia were low compared to the levels detected in North America or Europe. In New Zealand, the illicit market for cocaine is even smaller than in Australia; cocaine abuse is limited to a small segment of the population of New Zealand, as shown in the relatively low prevalence of cocaine abuse (0.6 per cent in 2008).

695. The lack of statistics on illicit drug use, production and trafficking in the Pacific island countries does not permit an assessment of the overall situation with regard to drug control in Oceania. While the use of cannabis and kava (*Piper methysticum*) has long been considered to be widespread, the misuse of prescription opioids, including tramadol, is also increasingly being reported in the Pacific islands.

696. A number of treatment options are available to drug-dependent persons in the region. According to the latest figures, in Australia the number of episodes reported in 659 facilities for the treatment of alcohol and drug dependence increased to 153,668 (an increase of 2 per cent) in the financial year 2011/12. In all states and territories in Australia except South Australia, where amphetamines are more common, alcohol and cannabis are the most two common drugs of concern, and different types of treatment such as counselling, withdrawal management and support and case management) are used. (In New Zealand, opioid substitution treatment is also available.) In a comprehensive review of the recent spending by the Government of Australia on drug control, however, concern was expressed over the drop in spending on demand reduction during a period of increased spending on policing.