

Oceania Report to the 3rd World Forum Against Drugs, Stockholm, Sweden, 23 May 2012.

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1. What constitutes the Oceania Region?

The countries that make up Oceania are listed below. Those marked in *red are not yet signatories to the UN Conventions. As a result, accurate data from these countries remains difficult to gather.



Australia

New Zealand

Christmas Island

Cocos Island

***Cook Islands**

Fiji

***Kiribati**

Micronesia

Marshall Islands

***Nauru**

Niue

***Palau**

New Caledonia

Norfolk Island

***Papua New Guinea**

***Samoa**

***Solomon Islands**

Timore-Leste

Tokelau

Tonga

***Tuvalu**

***Vanuatu**

Of more concern, according to the 2011 INCB Annual Report, ‘many of these countries have become trans-shipment areas and destinations for trafficked drugs and precursors. Their long coastlines have facilitated drug trafficking activities’.

In the same report, a special appeal was made for those countries ‘to accede to the international drug control treaties to which they are not yet parties without further delay’.

2. Concerning trends in Australia and New Zealand:

Australia and New Zealand remain the highest per capita in illicit drug use in the developed world. The following table is an indicator, based on a report in the Lancet in January 2012:

Percentage of 15-64 year olds who admit to having used the following drugs in the last 12 months.

	Cannabis/Marijuana	Amphetamines
Oceania (mainly Australia and New Zealand due to gaps in regional data)	14.8%	2.8%
Africa	10.4%	1.4%
Americas (including south America)	7%	1%
Asia	2.5%	1.4%
Europe	5.3%	0.6%

In Australia and NZ a policy of Harm Minimisation remains entrenched. **Of concern is the fact that this is having an influence in other, smaller Oceanic countries.**

How does the policy of Harm Minimisation translate into Harm Reduction? Here are some updated examples in Australia.

- **An injecting room in Kings Cross, Sydney – now permanent**
- **Needle and Syringe Programs** that lack accountability including no exchange of needles, nor referral requirement. Syringe vending machines have been installed in public places, with needles being extracted with the insertion of a coin. **A strong push for needle programs in prisons.**
- **Drug Traffickers who receive light or even suspended sentences** – little or no deterrent in the legal system and there is also a lack of consistency in drug laws across the country.
- **Reduced funding for treatment services** in the most recent Federal budget and **no requirement to prioritise recovery-based rehabilitation**
- **Government funding and support for drug user organisations** – for example an organization called the ‘Australian Injecting Drug Users’ League continue to receive funding for ‘peer education’ to help people use drugs ‘safely’. Their CEO now sits on the Australian Council on Drugs (ANCD); this is the principal advisory body on drugs to the Australian Government.
- **High priority to Methadone maintenance** – many people remain on methadone for life, and overdose rates are high. **No attempt has been made to support the alternative of a clinical trial for naltrexone implants, which have been documented as successful in Western Australia for over a decade.**
- **Effectively dismantling the School Drug Education Strategy**, by diverting resources from school drug education programs.
- **Decriminalisation of Cannabis in some states and defacto decriminalisation in others** – where at most, people are given a warning, or perhaps charged an expiation fee. This has resulted in continued high use of cannabis in Australia.
- **Strong push for drug legalization** with the formation of an ‘expert group’ and the publication of the Australia 21 Report in April 2012.

Other areas of concern related to Oceania are highlighted Chapter 2 of the INCB Annual Report, 2011, for instance:

- An increase in the smuggling of cocaine into Oceania has posed a new challenge to drug control efforts in that region. In Australia, the number of cocaine-related offences has increased significantly in the past decade. The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report reveals that the annual prevalence rate of cocaine abuse is higher than ever before.
- New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga have also reported an increase in cocaine seizures.
- Organized global crime syndicates are actively involved in drug trafficking in Oceania.
- Increased abuse of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes In Australia, the annual prevalence rate of abuse of such preparations among persons aged 14 years and older increased considerably, from 3.7 per cent in 2007 to 4.2 per cent in 2010, the second highest rate since 1995.
- Illegal Internet pharmacies and diversion from licit distribution channels continue to be the main sources of supply of benzodiazepines.
- In New Zealand, the abuse of pharmaceutical preparations containing morphine or codeine is becoming more common.
- Cannabis continues to be the most commonly seized drug in Oceania. In Australia, it accounted for 70 per cent of drug seizures and for 76 per cent of the volume of drugs seized nationwide in the 12 months to June 2010.
- Illicit cultivation of cannabis plant was the primary source of cannabis supply in New Zealand in 2010.
- According to UNODC, cannabis plant is cultivated widely in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Some varieties of cannabis illicitly cultivated in those countries are regarded as some of the **most potent available worldwide**.
- In Australia, a record 585 clandestine laboratories used for the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants were dismantled between July 2009 and June 2010, compared with 297 during the previous year.
- In June 2011, the Australian authorities dismantled one of the largest clandestine laboratories — with the capacity to manufacture up to 70 kg of methamphetamine and comparable quantities of “ecstasy” — ever to have been discovered in Australia.
- In New Zealand, the quantity of methamphetamine seized in 2010 reached 30 kg, about 65% of which was trafficked from abroad.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is important to note that there is concern by the UNODC that the issues in Australia and NZ will extend quickly to other countries in Oceania.

The following are recommendations for the WFAD Board’s consideration:

- (a) Recognising the need for comprehensive regional data collection and prevention of drug trafficking, World Federation Against Drugs supports the INCB’s call on the remaining nine countries in Oceania, yet to sign the UN Drug Control Conventions, to do so without delay.*
 - (b) Considering the current illicit drug statistics in Oceania, and particularly in Australia and New Zealand, and acknowledging the need for change from a purely harm minimization approach, WFAD recommends that the relevant drug policy leaders in the region, consider the merits of the ‘Joint Statement for a Humane and Balanced Drug Policy’, as signed by the representatives of Sweden, United States, United Kingdom, Italy and Russia at the 3rd World Forum Against Drugs.*
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