Media Release

**DRUG GANGS TARGET RURAL NEW ZEALAND WITH METHAMPHETAMINE**

*(Auckland: Wednesday, 7th November 2018):* Small towns and rural areas in New Zealand are potentially being targeted by gangs who promote methamphetamine use in favour of cannabis to maximise revenue, according to new research.

The study, "Determinants of High Availability of Methamphetamine, Cannabis, LSD and Ecstasy in New Zealand" was at the APSAD Scientific Alcohol and Drug Conference, where leading researchers, clinicians, policy makers and community representatives from across Australasia are gathered to share latest insights into major alcohol and other drug issues facing society.

"Many small towns in New Zealand have reported very high availability of methamphetamine, and conversely, a shortage of cannabis. Local commentators have suggested drug dealers are deliberately promoting methamphetamine at the expense of cannabis. Our study sought to investigate this," said lead researcher Associate Professor Chris Wilkins, from Massey University’s SHORE & Whāriki Research Centre.

The study confirmed that methamphetamine is more available than cannabis in all areas, and is more available in rural areas and small towns than cities.

Cannabis availability was notably low in places where methamphetamine availability was particularly high.

Other predictors of high availability of methamphetamine included purchasing from a gang member.

These findings suggest that it may be the case that gangs are able to gain monopoly control over drugs markets in small towns and promote methamphetamine in favour of cannabis to maximise revenue.

"We need further research to understand these relationships," says Dr Wilkins. "It may be the case that small towns offer an environment where a gang can control the local drugs market."

**ABOUT APSAD AUCKLAND 2018**

The APSAD Scientific Alcohol and other Drugs Conference is the southern hemisphere’s largest summit on alcohol and other drugs attracting leading researchers, clinicians, policy makers and community representatives from across the region. The Conference is run by the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD), Asia Pacific's leading multidisciplinary organisation for professionals involved in the alcohol and other drugs field. This year’s conference will showcase high quality and state of the art scientific research into treatment, prevention and policy. It is being held at the Pullman Auckland Hotel, New Zealand 4-7 November.

- [View the APSAD Auckland 2018 Program](#)
- [Read more about the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD)](#)

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