

Lighter sentences the wrong reason to attend drug programmes

The hope of getting a lighter sentence or parole is the main reason many Maori prisoners go on alcohol or drug programmes. That's the finding of Te Ara Hou, a group of Auckland Maori working to promote a Maori perspective in combating substance abuse. Chairman is Rau Kapa, secretary, Te Puea Askin and treasurer, Lilly Heihei.

In recent months there have been an increasing number of clients both in prison and on probation who have expressed dissatisfaction at the service being supplied by existing agencies. Many Maori clients have stated that they attend AA and other related groups as a means to an end, that is, to feather their nests to ensure that they have a better chance of getting parole or half remission. Notwithstanding this, their alcohol and drug related problems are still with them when they are released.

It is hoped that a Maori approach by trained counsellors, who will counsel the client from a Maori perspective, will go a long way to stemming the flow of able bodied people into the penal institutions of this country.

It must be remembered also that although this "service" is Maori orientated it does not preclude non-Maoris from participating, not only as counsellors but also as clients.

Te Ara Hou have a training centre in Boston Road, Auckland, but they say a centre is needed to undertake this "Maori perspective" counselling. At the moment they are looking at Avenell House in Mt Eden Road, Auckland, which is being administered by the Probation Service. It's hoped agreement will be reached between the two groups so that a counselling service can begin as soon as possible. It is envisaged that treatment will take several forms.

a) Prison Inmate Treatment

This will consist of suitably qualified counsellors visiting the various prisons

on a regular basis to implement the rehabilitation programme. This programme will last for as long as the person is in prison. It may also include family counselling to prepare all parties for the eventual release of the inmate. It will require that all penal staff co-operate in this venture for it to work.

b) Pre-Release Treatment

It is proposed that in the last three months of an inmate sentence, that provision be made (at Medium Security level) for an inmate to be released, firstly on a one day basis for treatment which will include his/her family support system.

A full training programme is to be organised by Te Ara Hou. It is envisaged that it will incorporate all that is good and beneficial from the already established alcohol and drug abuse agencies, which we feel is essential to the natural development of the overall programme, as well as that component

that encompasses the "inherent value systems of the Maori people".

To implement the "inherent value system" philosophy it would be reasonable to expect that in the first instance, people with a strong Maori identity, knowledge and natural skills be given the opportunity to undergo the inaugural training programme.

It would be reasonable to expect that once the training programme is perfected that invitations to participate in the training (education) programme be extended in the first instance to staff within the Probation and Penal Services and, having satisfied that quota, it then be extended to other agencies.

The National Maori Co-ordinator in his recent report to the Council details the course of action needed to implement Maori perspectives in alcohol social policy. Te Ara Hou will work in tandem with ALAC researchers and Dr Sally Casswell.

Joint trust venture for 'glue sniffers'

Youngsters troubled by alcohol or drug dependence now have a 'house mother and father' in Wellington.

A co-operative partnership between Te Niho Niho o Apopo Trust and Presbyterian Support Services has established a house in Berhampore and a residential programme for young people.

According to statistics from the Alcohol and Drug Centre, Wellington, glue abuse has been increasing in Wellington in recent years for example 13 young people being seen regularly over a four month period.

The home can take up to ten people

and presently houses four.

The programme emphasises self-esteem to help the children understand and eventually eliminate the problems that lead to substance abuse. It provides opportunities for the young residents to learn to develop the social skills and attitudes needed in society.

The partnership between the Trust and Presbyterian Social Services has meant a pooling of resources and expertise. The programme director is Faith Denny and she works with two tutors and a management team.

Mike Woodward is the administrator of the residential centre.