

# just actions

Bad boozing, illegal drugs and gambling create hell for families



Caring for people, transforming lives, reforming society by God's power



## 'How can we tell our children that drinking can be harmful when the All Blacks have Steinlager on their chests?' Respondent to the Law Commission report on alcohol in New Zealand, 2010

**Alcohol-abuse, illegal drugs and gambling create hell on earth for many families and communities. Alcohol is a major force in our national economy, a multi-billion-dollar industry that employs more than 7000 people in manufacturing alcohol and more than 62,000 in the hospitality and retail services that support it (liquor stores, pubs, cafes, restaurants and sports clubs). The sheer magnitude and economic value of these numbers signals how culturally embedded alcohol is within our communities.**

Because of its widespread use, drinking can become costly to us all when it is misused. Every day, alcohol abuse contributes to public insecurity. It leads to domestic violence and some 1000 preventable deaths every year, including injuries, road casualties, accidents, suicides and cancers. Young people (particularly males) between 15 and 29 years, Maori and Polynesians suffer a disproportionate level of this alcohol-related harm.

A survey of arrested offenders from four police stations in 2008/09 discovered that 80% of arrestees attributed their offending to alcohol use, 68% of methamphetamine users reported that the drug had contributed to their offending, and 36% of cannabis users reported the same about the impact of their drug use.<sup>1</sup>

The social cost of illegal drug usage in New Zealand is estimated to be near \$1 billion annually, which equates to more than half of what we spend nationally on justice, the courts, police, corrections and customs.

Pokie machines, while declining in prevalence, continue to be the largest source of gambling losses for families, accounting for nearly 44% of the \$2 billion dollars that New Zealanders lost in gambling during 2009.

Taking steps to challenge our growing culture of excess, and engaging with industries that manufacture, promote and profit from these impoverishing social hazards is both morally right and pragmatically necessary for a more just and safer New Zealand.

### Re-thinking the stakes: get together and discuss

- 1 Is our binge-drinking culture, high usage of illegal drugs and addiction to gambling evidence of how we collectively tolerate (and even champion) excess? How can we challenge those industries that fuel and profit from our excesses?
- 2 How can we promote a positive alternative of a lifestyle free of alcohol, drugs and gambling?
- 3 What is The Salvation Army stand on alcohol, illegal drugs and gambling? Why have we taken this distinctive stand? How can we talk up the positive differences of the Soldier's Covenant?

### Re-actions: what can we do?

- 1 Visit with your local council and/or MP and share your concerns over the growing social harm caused by the abuse of alcohol, illegal drugs and gambling. Communicate that you believe the regulation of these social hazards to be a defining political issue that will determine how you vote.
- 2 Help organise alcohol/drug-free community fun events and invite friends/peers/neighbours to see what is possible.
- 3 Contact a local Salvation Army Bridge Programme, a Salvation Army Oasis Centre for Problem Gambling, or a Salvation Army Recovery Church near you and ask what you can do to help their ministry. Go to [salvationarmy.org.nz/addictions](http://salvationarmy.org.nz/addictions) for more information.

### Resources for re-formative worship: take a fresh look

- 4 Download The Salvation Army's Positional Statements and Talk Sheets on Alcohol, Illegal Drug Use and Gambling, from [www.salvationarmy.org.nz/masic](http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/masic)
- 5 View 'Alcohol in our Lives', a presentation by Sir Geoffrey Palmer at [youtube.com/watch?v=tEsgTj3wQYk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEsgTj3wQYk)
- 6 Visit [alcoholaction.co.nz](http://alcoholaction.co.nz) and [salvationarmy.org.nz/addictions](http://salvationarmy.org.nz/addictions) for more ideas, info and resources.

Endnotes: <sup>1</sup> Annual Report, New Zealand Police (2008-09)