

Massive jump in Canterbury P crime

By PHIL HAMILTON - The Press | Wednesday, 02 April 2008

Methamphetamine offences have more than doubled in Canterbury over the past year, the latest crime statistics show.

While crime in the region has risen by only 1.7 per cent, recorded incidents involving methamphetamine, or P, have jumped from 55 in 2006 to 137 last year - a rise of 149 per cent. There were nine murders last year, compared with four in 2006.

However, 2006 was the best year in a decade, with the previous two years each recording 14 murders.

Acting District Commander Inspector Andy McGregor said the jump in methamphetamine busts, particularly clandestine laboratories, was disturbing.

"Because of the impact of methamphetamine, it's always a concern where we have an increase, especially with P, because of the negative side-effects on people who are under its influence," he said.

No more resources had been put into combating drug offences, but officers seemed to be coming across more clandestine labs in the course of their work.

The huge jump in the number of P offences in Canterbury contrasts with the national figures, which show a slight decrease.

McGregor said he could not explain the reasons for that.

Drugs, domestic violence and anti-social offences all bucked the trend of small increases or decreases with big jumps last year. The increase in drug offences was driven by the relative newcomer P.

Cannabis offences were up 15 per cent, rising from 1407 in 2006 to 1626 last year.

In Canterbury, domestic-violence incidents increased from 431 to 549, a jump of 27 per cent, below the national increase of 31.5 per cent.

Women's Refuge said the increase in family-violence crimes last year showed the big challenge facing the country and all agencies dealing with domestic violence.

National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges chief executive Heather Henare said the more than 30 per cent increase in reported family-violence crimes was alarming.

Part of the increase could be higher reporting, driven by the "It's Not OK" campaign, launched in September.

She said the underlying fact was that the scale of family violence in New Zealand was at epidemic level.

It required significant resources and investment before it could be turned around.

"We're seeing one woman die every 26 days at the hands of her partner or former partner, while countless others are injured and scarred every single day," she said.

"The cost on children experiencing and witnessing this violence is also huge."

McGregor said police had poured a lot of resources into combating domestic violence with their family-safety teams and other initiatives.

A low percentage was reported, but the situation was improving because of publicity campaigns and the statutory obligation on some professions to report offences, he said.

"The more reported, the better it is," he said.

"At least we know the extent of what is out there so we can do more about it."

Operation Crusader, which involves more police officers on the beat in central Christchurch on Friday and Saturday nights, has led to more arrests for breaches of liquor bans and laws.

Sale of Liquor Act offences jumped 35 per cent, and disorder offences were up 17 per cent.

"We're concentrating on minor offending to prevent more serious offences," McGregor said.

"Our philosophy is if we can arrest them, then we can reduce the risk of offending or being victims."

He said the most pleasing factors in the statistics were the reductions in violence (by 0.3 per cent), burglaries (11 per cent) and car crimes (12 per cent).

"We're very pleased with the way we've targeted offending in those areas of burglaries and car crimes," he said.

"There are just about 1000 people who were not victims compared to the previous year, which is a great result."

<http://stuff.co.nz/4460055a11.html>