

P is not the major addiction problem in New Zealand

A big increase in the number of calls to the Alcohol Drug Helpline in January was fuelled by men worried about their own alcohol addiction, according to Cate Kearney, chief executive of the Alcohol Drug Association of New Zealand, which runs the Helpline.

"The busiest period was between January 12 and 23, when there was a particularly high call rate from males between the ages of 25 and 60 concerned about their drinking," Kearney said. The Helpline calls for January 2009 (1,486) were 19% higher than the 1251 calls received in January 2008.

"It seems that a lot of callers came back from the Christmas holidays realising they had a problem and they needed to do something about it. We see this pattern every year, but this year, January has been much busier than the previous two years. "

Kearney said this confirmed that the biggest addiction issue in New Zealand continued to be alcohol, despite the constant headlines about the use of P.

"Because methamphetamine is often associated with violent crime in the media, people blame P for fuelling crime, rather than looking to see if an individual had pre-existing patterns of violent or aggressive behaviour. The two issues – P and violence – can be quite separate issues and one does not necessarily 'cause' the other".

"The treatment sector sees a steady number of people with methamphetamine dependence. P does cause significant harm but this distress is not always about violence," she said.

"P is of concern but alcohol is the major problem facing New Zealand at this time".

For further information, and a breakdown of the Helpline statistics, please call:

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Phone 379 8626 or 021 301 566.