



# APRIL SUMMARY

30 April 2025

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*Hon. Casey Costello, Minister of Customs and Associate Minister of Police*

## ONE OF THE BIGGEST LIES IN THE WORLD IS THAT CRIME DOESN'T PAY. OF COURSE, CRIME PAYS.

- ▶ Like any other business, transnational, serious and organised crime (**organised crime**) groups want to minimise risk and maximise profit. At present, New Zealand is a highly attractive market for organised crime.
- ▶ While profits are the primary motivation for organised crime – they are also its greatest vulnerability. By attacking the flows of money to organised criminals, we can weaken their influence in New Zealand, reduce their power, and reduce the harm to all New Zealanders.
- ▶ When profits are high, organised crime can easily recruit New Zealanders into criminality. They can corrupt those working in trusted positions. When profits are high, vulnerabilities at our borders and in our key institutions will be exacerbated.
- ▶ Successive governments have sought to implement and strengthen measures to control the flows of money for illicit purposes, including organised crime. New Zealand has sound and credible arrangements by international standards, but they are not keeping pace to counter the threat posed by modern crime.
- ▶ Police are doing an admirable job restraining assets worth around **\$75 million each year** within the current legal framework – this is around 4.2 percent of estimated crime profits.
- ▶ Cash is the preferred currency of criminals. Cash gives criminals anonymity, making it challenging for law enforcement to detect and deter funding flows. Criminals operate at the speed at which money can move. Law enforcement can only operate at the speed of the law.
- ▶ The inability of law enforcement to obtain relevant information (e.g. from banks) in the absence of a court approved order means there are limitations on how law enforcement can protect the community from organised crime.
- ▶ Safeguards that were intended to protect from unjust seizures, are instead contributing to a situation where confiscation processes are too slow and inefficient to provide effective disruption and deterrence.
- ▶ We have seen situations where prosecutions for money laundering have not been prioritised because of the difficulty in obtaining a relevant conviction.

- ▶ We can't expect the Police and other agencies to do more within the current legal framework. To be effective, we need to provide additional powers for agencies to aggressively attack the profits of organised crime.
- ▶ Therefore, we need to focus solutions on achieving the strategic objectives of attacking organised crime and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the whole of system response.

## Recommendations

The Group recommends that you attack the profits of organised crime by:

1. strengthening the asset recovery framework to provide for an efficient and effective process, while maintaining core CPRA protections and oversight
2. improving responsiveness to stop suspicious money transfers
3. strengthening investigative powers to focus on likely offenders
4. broaden the money laundering offence to address criminal behaviours that enable and facilitate organised crime
5. make cash a less attractive option for organised crime by tightening controls to improve oversight
6. enhancing financial intelligence capability through collaboration and involvement of the private sector
7. building public awareness about the risks and signs of illicit transactions.

Steve Symon  
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