



# JUNE REPORT

3 July 2025

TSOC-MAG 25/04

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

## ONE TEAM AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME

### KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ The harms caused by transnational, serious and organised crime (organised crime) are increasing. Our communities and businesses are suffering as a result.
- ▶ But our communities and businesses are vital partners in the solution. They are resilient, resourceful and ready to respond – with the right support. They must be equipped with the knowledge, awareness and tools that they need to help with the fight against organised crime. The framework for some of the approaches required are already in place.

#### A unified response

- ▶ Breaking long term, intergenerational cycles will require sustained, concerted strategy and action at both government and community levels to address the symptoms and the root causes of organised crime.

#### Being tough on organised crime means removing their customers

- ▶ We have recommended a strong enforcement approach in previous reports. But it is also important to take a proactive approach to reduce the demand for illicit goods and services. This includes supporting vulnerable individuals to exit criminal supply chains and addressing the root causes of crime. This requires early intervention, harm reduction, and community-based treatment options.
- ▶ Migrant exploitation, in particular, requires coordinated offshore and onshore prevention, stronger regulatory oversight and corporate accountability, along with community engagement to detect and disrupt exploitation networks.

#### Resilience

- ▶ Community solutions must be delivered in ways that have maximum impact against organised crime and continue to build and strengthen communities' capacity to resist harm.
- ▶ This requires a balanced approach between law enforcement and community objectives. In some circumstances, the focus may require effort to address gaps in the network of social provision, in others, the focus may be more on clearing

organised crime groups out of communities and providing the space to rebuild social services.

#### **Education and Awareness**

- ▶ Communities must be equipped with accessible, locally relevant information to understand the harms and the drivers of organised crime, to be able to identify and report suspicious activities and to hold government agencies and business accountable for the response.

#### **Cost-Effectiveness and Social Investment**

- ▶ Prevention-focused strategies are more fiscally sustainable than enforcement-only models.
- ▶ The Social Investment Agency provides a framework to prioritise resources based on data and evidence, ensuring support reaches the most vulnerable people, whānau, and communities.

Steve Symon  
Chair, Ministerial Advisory Group

## INTRODUCTION

1. As outlined in our report in March, the social and economic harms caused by transnational, serious and organised crime (organised crime) are being acutely felt within our communities.
2. But we are hopeful. That hope is built on our faith in our communities (and business partners) who have told us they want to help in the fight against organised crime. If New Zealanders work together as one team, that will provide us our best chance to defeat organised crime.
3. There are three key parts to strengthening the role played by communities:
  - a. **Prevention.** Our communities must be given the tools they require to do their part in the fight against organised crime. This must occur alongside other prevention methods, law enforcement, central and local government policies and private interests.
  - b. **Resilience.** Educating communities and giving them the tools cannot be a short-term fix, as otherwise the problem will re-emerge. A framework supported by all relevant government agencies must be established that ensures that our communities build up long-term resilience to the destructive impacts of organised crime. This should build on the Resilience to Organised Crime in Communities (ROCC) work programme.
  - c. **Education and Awareness.** Members of our community must be given accessible, locally relevant information to help them understand and be aware of the problems that are caused by organised crime at a regional and community level. This includes problems that come from drug supply, from fraud, from migrant exploitation and from cyber scams. They should also understand how to spot the indicators of crime.
4. We need to be unified in our response. The role that communities play must occur alongside agencies, NGOs and government strategies, such as a strong prevention, response and enforcement approach targeted at the drivers of organised crime. We cannot arrest our way out of this problem alone – unless we reduce the underlying demand for illicit goods, supply will be met by new groups.
5. Part of being tough on crime is targeting the demand for criminal activity and reducing the market. That is, removing the customers of crime – the addictions fuelling drug crime, the vulnerabilities that lead to people being defrauded or exploited. The community must play a key role in reducing the market, by understanding the drivers and effects of crime, by having and using tools to help to remove the customers and providing treatment pathways to keep customers out of the market long-term.
6. Done well, a prevention-led approach within communities is far more cost-effective than an enforcement only approach.
7. Breaking long term, intergenerational cycles will require sustained, concerted action across communities, businesses, government and enforcement agencies. The central

objective of our response is to harden the environment to prevent organised crime from operating in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

## TEAMING UP TO FIGHT ORGANISED CRIME

8. Organised crime is the common enemy for communities, legitimate business and government agencies. It poses a significant threat to the safety, wellbeing, and prosperity of all New Zealanders.
9. These harms manifest themselves in our communities in a myriad of different ways as outlined in our March report.<sup>2</sup> To effectively combat these threats, we need to work as one team. Government agencies, law enforcement, businesses, community organisations, and residents must work collaboratively to address both the symptoms and root causes of organised crime.
10. Each brings unique strengths:
  - a. Community groups foster resilience, inclusion and the ability to prevent organised crime at the local level.
  - b. Businesses offer employment opportunities and stability. They play a crucial role in strengthening local economies and offering alternatives to criminal pathways—particularly for at-risk youth.
  - c. Currently central and local government set strategies/frameworks and funding and at the regional and local levels they provide engagement, coordination with communities and implementation of the activities.
  - d. Law enforcement agencies, such as Police and Customs, target and disrupt criminal activities.

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*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.*

*My strength is not the strength of one but the strength of many.*

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<sup>1</sup> The harms caused by organised crime intersect with wider social challenges, such as family violence – while these are beyond the scope of our terms of reference, it is necessary for us to consider them in the context of our response to organised crime.

<sup>2</sup> The estimated cost of personal and community harms caused by methamphetamine, cocaine and MDMA is estimated to be \$1.65 billion in 2024. (National Drug Intelligence Bureau (2025) [Drugs in Wastewater 2024 Annual Overview](#))

It is likely that serious criminal exploitation, such as people trafficking, forced labour and sexual exploitation, is underreported and growing within New Zealand. Fraud and cyber scams cause emotional and financial harm to victims.

In 2023, New Zealand victims of fraud reported the total costs of financial losses was \$397 million, with related social costs of a further \$989 million. (Ministry of Justice (2024) [New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey. Key stories – Cycle 6](#), p 13.)

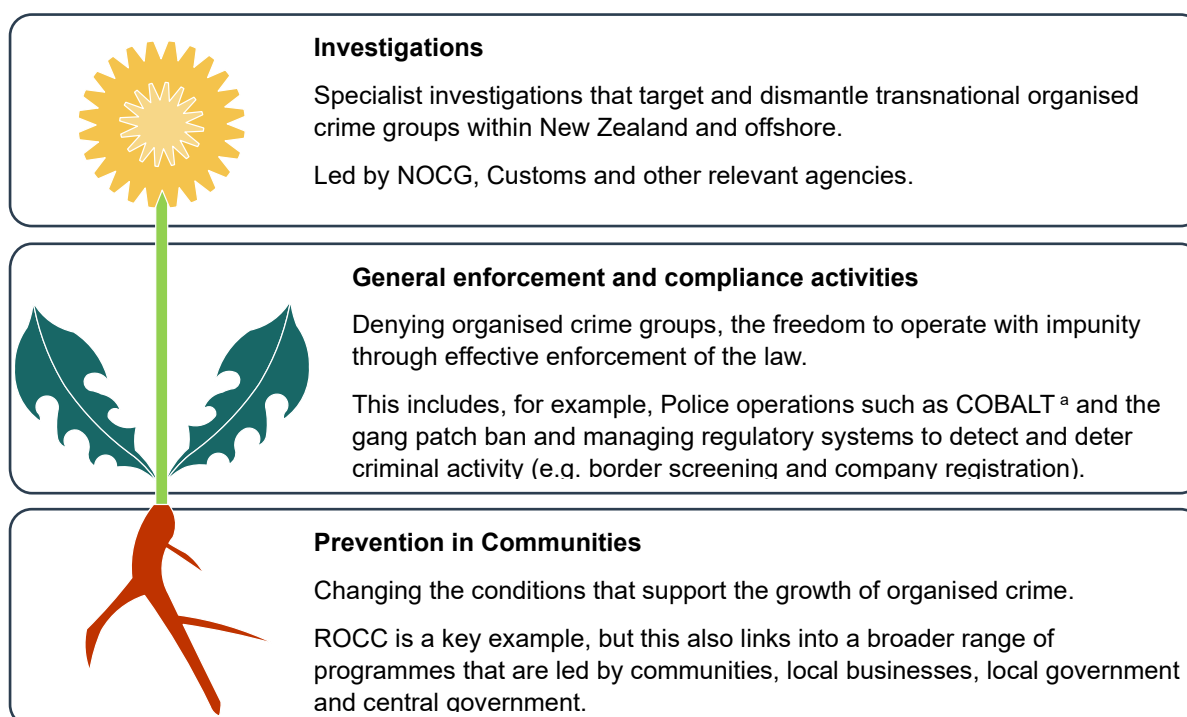
## A NATIONAL TSOC STRATEGY WITH LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

11. We need to create a more coordinated and impactful response to organised crime. There is considerable value in building an integrated strategy, with an appropriate oversight function, that coordinates action across enforcement and prevention activities within communities.
12. This is consistent with the foundational objectives for national drug policies: problem limitation, demand reduction and supply control.<sup>3</sup> These principles have informed the work recently undertaken by the meth sprint team commissioned by the Prime Minister.

### Focus on prevention

13. We agree that building community resilience to organised crime should be a part of the wider TNOG Strategy refresh.<sup>4</sup> The strategies and responses to prevent organised crime are complex and require coordinated effort across law enforcement, other government agencies, communities and international partners. An enhanced tasking and coordination process involving agencies and community leaders is crucial.
14. Organised crime prevention can take place at three different levels, like removing a weed, as shown in the diagram below. To remove organised crime, the whole weed needs to be removed and the area treated to prevent it from re-emerging.

Figure 1: A layered approach to preventing weeds (and organised crime)



a. Operation Cobalt ran across all 12 Police districts from June 2022 to December 2024. In that time, 107,073 charges were filed, 143,610 traffic-related infringement notices were issued, 757 firearms were seized. NZ Police (24 February 2025) [Police put pressure on gangs](#)

<sup>3</sup> Inter-Agency Committee on Drugs (2015) [National Drug Policy 2015 to 2020](#), pp 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> At the same time, we recognise the original rationale for developing what became the ROCC programme was to allow ministers on Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee to have oversight over what is, at its heart, a social issue [SWC-19-SUB-0135].

15. These layers illustrate the two distinct approaches to countering organised crime in communities:
  - a. a community-led approach that is focused on building long-term resilience, which also provides the social infrastructure ready to support major operations against organised crime (e.g. the ROCC programme)
  - b. a law enforcement-led approach that is primarily focused on disrupting and dismantling organised crime groups, which is then followed up with shorter-term interventions to build community resilience (e.g. Clear, Hold, Build used in the UK).
16. Community involvement in responding to organised crime should be guided by a national strategy. But the local frameworks must be flexible and tailored to the needs of different communities. It is important for social interventions to be strongly aligned within the wider network of social provision. The Regional Public Service Commissioners and the Social Investment Agency can play a key role in coordinating the delivery of services at a community level.

### Performance and accountability

17. We recognise that for a national strategy with decentralised outcomes to be effective, strong accountability mechanisms are essential. Our August report will focus on system-wide accountability across the TSOC framework. This will include an independent oversight function to monitor and assess the performance and impact of various components against strategic objectives.
18. For community-led programmes, we expect this oversight to consider the broader social returns generated by these initiatives. This will help ensure that investment decisions are guided by robust evidence and aligned with the Government's Social Investment Approach—enabling people, families, and communities to achieve meaningful and measurable outcomes.

#### Operation Highwater – Ōpōtiki

The town of Ōpōtiki in the eastern Bay of Plenty has a population of around 5,000 people – with around the same number in the wider district.

Operation Highwater was a major investigation by the National Organised Crime Group targeting the Mongrel Mob Barbarians in Ōpōtiki. Sparked by rising gang violence and drug-related harm, the operation uncovered serious criminal activity including methamphetamine distribution, firearms offences, and money laundering. It concluded in October 2024 with 39 arrests and 205 charges laid across several regions.

The ROCC programme supported its partners Eastern Bay Iwi Provider Alliance<sup>5</sup> to deliver both immediate and long-term community support.<sup>6</sup> Short-term funding helped strengthen local support



<sup>5</sup> The four partners in the alliance are: Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau Hauora, Te Tohu o te Ora o Ngāti Awa, Tuhoe Hauora, and Te Pou Oranga o Whakatōhea

<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that in the immediate aftermath of the operation, Te Whakatōhea, the iwi based in Ōpōtiki, voiced concerns that some tamariki were left to fend for themselves during the police action, and they called for better coordination between police and iwi in future. We understand that Police communications ahead of the operation were limited in order to

networks, while longer-term investment—through the Ministry of Social Development’s Community Resilience and Whānau Support Fund —focused on reducing youth gang involvement, tackling meth harm, and building community resilience in Ōpōtiki and the wider Eastern Bay of Plenty.

Early feedback from the community has been encouraging. Many residents expressed a sense of relief, with one noting they were **“sick and tired of their [organised criminal groups] intimidation, peddling meth and sucking the life out of Ōpōtiki.”**

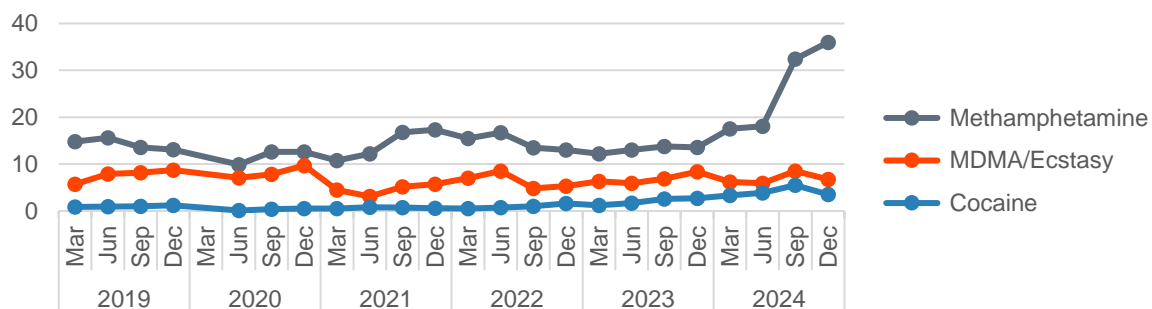
Others were surprised and reassured by the police’s commitment to follow-up support, with one community member stating, **“We didn’t know that Police cared about follow-up support of whānau and could help refer people to support services.”**<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to wider wastewater trends across the country, the amount of meth consumed in Ōpōtiki reduced by 50 percent following the operation in October 2024 – this reduced level has been sustained through to the most recent sampling available in March.

## REMOVING THE CUSTOMERS OF DRUG CRIME

19. Organised crime is run as a business – take away the customers and the business is no longer viable. The supply of illicit drugs provides a good example. Enforcement measures aim to prevent organised crime by targeting the supply of drugs. But we are now in a situation where Customs is seizing far more illicit drugs than it ever has before while, at the same time, we have seen a substantial increase in the consumption of methamphetamine and cocaine in New Zealand.
20. Even before the spike in meth and cocaine, there were real pressures on addiction services in New Zealand. For example, in 2023/24:
  - a. New Zealand spent around \$235 million on specialist alcohol and other drug services
  - b. 44,850 people accessed AOD services
  - c. Wait times into specialist addiction services within 3 weeks were 75.8 percent.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 2: Estimates of total weekly consumption of selected illicit drugs (kg) by quarter



Source: ESR/NDIB: Wastewater Monitoring Programme.

maintain operational security. See Tuwhenuaroa Natanahira (5 November 2024) ‘[Ōpōtiki raids: Iwi rejects minister’s denial children were left without parents](#)’ *Radio New Zealand*.

<sup>7</sup> Source: New Zealand Police

<sup>8</sup> Te Hīringa Mahara - Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (2025) [Addiction specialist services – access, workforce, investment, and outcomes](#)



Note: no testing was undertaken in the March 2020 quarter

21. The costs of organised crime are unavoidable – the question is whether we pay for it through increased efforts to reduce demand or through enforcement, or through the longer-term costs of social harms, including, for example, the costs of imprisonment.<sup>9</sup>
22. It requires community support to stop users from returning to the supply chain. We have heard from community leaders that it would be helpful to see drug use as a health issue rather than a criminal issue to enable addicts to access treatment.
23. There is also value in considering alternative treatment and support models that are more accessible and cost-effective than residential treatments.<sup>10</sup> We have heard that community-based approaches are most effective for addressing methamphetamine addiction given the long-term treatment and commitment required. Other treatment and support options include:
  - a. Increasing support for confidential drug testing services, which includes educating drug users on safe and responsible use of drugs.
  - b. Encouraging Police and other community members to refer people who use drugs to local treatment options (providing these options are available).<sup>11</sup>
  - c. Continuing support for community-based meth reduction programmes such as:
    - i. Te Ara Oranga in Northland.<sup>12</sup>
    - ii. New Zealand P-Pull, an informal network of meetings, a closed Facebook page and resources to empower individuals, families and communities to get off methamphetamine.<sup>13</sup>
  - d. Meeting other health needs like undiagnosed neurodiversity (such as ADHD) to ensure that illicit drugs are not being used to control those symptoms.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Imprisonment will always be one of the tools used to combat organised crime. For some offenders, it is the only suitable option. But it is important to recognise the high costs of imprisonment (around \$200,000 per prisoner per year), and low social returns despite long-term efforts to reduce reoffending.

<sup>10</sup> We have also heard that residential treatment options can cause tensions between those who have spent time in prison and those who have not.

<sup>11</sup> The AWHI tool provides frontline police officers real-time options to refer individuals to support services.

<sup>12</sup> Darren Walton and Samar Martin (2021) [The Evaluation of Te Ara Oranga: The Path to Wellbeing. A Methamphetamine Harm Reduction Programme in Northland](#). Wellington: Ministry of Health.

<sup>13</sup> NZP-Pull began in Waitangirua, Porirua, in 2016. There are now 9 walk in meetings operating in Gisborne (Gisborne city and Kaiti), Murupara, Waiuku, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Porirua, Upper Hutt and Pomare. See: Wesley Community Action (n.d.) [New Zealand P-Pull](#).

<sup>14</sup> New Zealand Drug Foundation (2024) [Neurodivergence and substance use](#).



### Turuki Healthcare, Counties Manukau

Taumata Service is a wraparound, home-visit service supporting individuals in the criminal justice system and their whānau to enable positive reintegration into the community and avoid reoffending.

Participants are supported by Navigators to access and engage in a range of social and health services which are tailored to their needs. This includes support relating to physical health, mental health, acute addictions, benefits entitlements and the justice system.

ImpactLab has estimated a social return on investment (SROI) of **\$4.60 for every \$1 spent**<sup>15</sup>



24. We know that illicit drug use can also lead to other criminal behaviours and entry into the justice system. Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Courts provide an alternative to incarceration for offenders with alcohol or drug addiction, and a treatment pathway with wraparound support services. AODT courts currently operate in Auckland, Waitākere and Hamilton, but have not yet been rolled out across the country.
25. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice published a summary evaluation report for the AODT courts in Auckland and Waitākere which indicated a relatively low return on investment of around **\$1.33 for every dollar invested**.<sup>16</sup> However, in a later report, the Ministry found that there were large reductions over all the reoffending measures, as well as for rates of Police non-crime related incidents, within the two years following a participant's entry into the AODT Court, when compared with matched offenders.<sup>17</sup> We recommend further consideration of whether AODT Courts should be rolled out nationwide to provide a cost-effective means of removing customers of organised crime.

## PREVENTING MIGRANT EXPLOITATION

26. Most New Zealanders would agree there is no place for the exploitation of migrants in our country.
27. Yet migrant exploitation is an emerging challenge within New Zealand. As we reported in March, MBIE received nearly four times the number of migrant exploitation complaints last year compared with the previous year (3,925 compared to 933).

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*Organised crime groups can sell an ounce of meth once,  
but they can sell a person many times in many ways.*

***Ben Quinn, Senior Liaison Officer (Bangkok), Immigration NZ***

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28. We have heard that it is highly likely that serious criminal exploitation, such as people trafficking, forced labour and sexual exploitation, is underreported and growing within

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<sup>15</sup> ImpactLab (2025) Turuki Health Care – Taumata Service – Goodmeasure results.

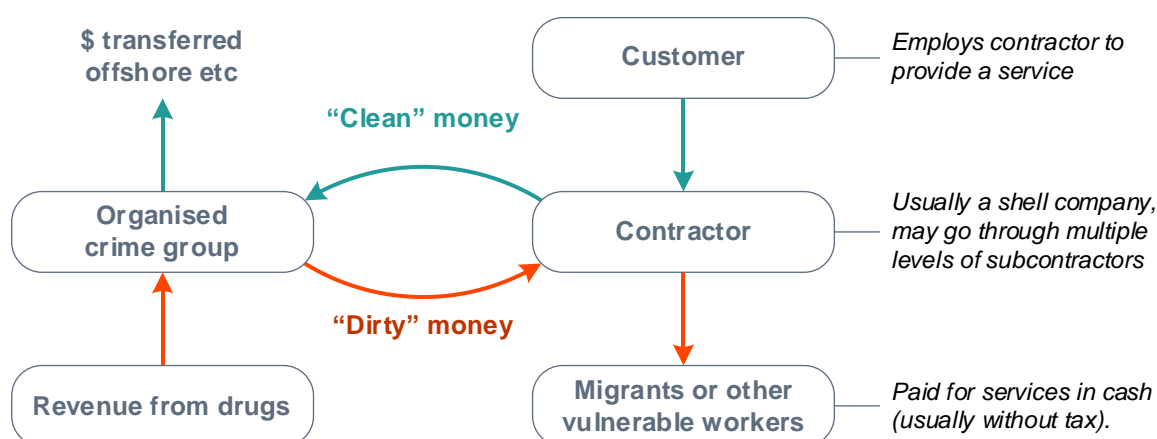
<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Justice (2019) [Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court Outcomes Evaluation 2018-19: Summary Evaluation Report](#).

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Justice (2019) [Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court quantitative outcomes evaluation 2018-19](#).

New Zealand. There are almost certainly exploited migrants in our horticulture, construction, beauty services and hospitality sectors.<sup>18</sup>

29. Businesses that exploit migrants are competing unfairly with legitimate New Zealand businesses and workers who are doing the right thing.
30. Aside from the direct benefits from underpayment to workers, organised crime groups also take advantage of murky subcontracting arrangements and shell companies to launder the profits from other criminal activities by swapping “dirty” cash (which is paid to migrant labour) with the “clean” money paid by the customer.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 3: Laundering the proceeds of crime through legitimate contracts



31. This is why in April, we recommended mandating the electronic payment of wages – starting with industries at high risk of migrant exploitation, such as construction, hospitality and horticulture.<sup>20</sup>

### Offshore prevention

32. To counter the threats of people trafficking, Immigration New Zealand works with strategic international partners. For example, they work with partners across Southeast Asia to disrupt trafficking networks and protect vulnerable communities. A key part of their work involves collaborating with local law enforcement and NGOs to identify risks and promote safe migration pathways. New Zealand works with international partners through initiatives like the Bali Process to prevent people smuggling and disrupt criminal networks. It is important that we continue to enhance offshore screening processes to prevent exploitation before individuals arrive in New Zealand. This will also require diplomatic engagement with embassies and high commissioners in New Zealand to understand what is being done and what can be done offshore to facilitate preventive measures in migrants' countries of origin.

<sup>18</sup> Information provided by MBIE. TSOC-MAG (2025) [March Report](#), pp 6.

<sup>19</sup> New Zealand Police Financial Intelligence Unit (2025) [New Zealand National Risk Assessment 2024 on Money Laundering, Terrorism Financing and Proliferation Financing](#), p 21.

<sup>20</sup> TSOC-MAG (2025) [April Full Report: One of the biggest lies is that crime doesn't pay. Of course, crime pays](#), pp 12-14.

33. There are still powerful factors that motivate migrants' decisions to participate in illegal migration. In many cases, the living conditions in migrants' home countries are far worse than in New Zealand. Migrants are willing to use people smugglers to gain faster entry to New Zealand, rather than going through legitimate routes. This means they become complicit in the offence and have limited ability to complain.
34. There needs to be more effective screening of visa applicants to prevent people from travelling to New Zealand unlawfully. This should focus on determining eligibility of individuals, as well as determining whether there is an actual employment need. This should occur both during the application phase and on arrival in New Zealand. It should be supported by the communities and towns where migrants are going to work. We recognise this may impose additional compliance costs on MBIE and applicants – but we consider these will be more than offset by reducing the harms resulting from migrant exploitation.

### Onshore detection and prevention

35. Given the challenges in reducing the supply of illegal migrants from offshore, it is critical to reduce the capacity of organised crime groups to exploit migrants within New Zealand. This requires both a strong and effective immigration system to detect invalid visas and to prosecute non-compliant employers, and community support to identify instances of exploitation occurring within the community. This should include engagement with businesses to gather insights into community patterns and players involved in organised crime and migrant exploitation. This should involve industries that are vulnerable to migrant exploitation, such as construction and horticulture, as well as groups that are involved in working with at-risk migrant communities.
36. There is scope for MBIE to continue to strengthen its processes, and we expect to see it held more accountable for performance of those processes in the future. We have heard from MBIE that there are also opportunities to strengthen complaints and reporting processes.
37. As part of the Immigration (Fiscal Sustainability and System Integrity) Amendment Bill, the Government is proposing changes to ensure more instances of migrant exploitation can be prosecuted. The Bill will make it an offence to charge an employee (or potential employee) a fee in exchange for a job, irrespective of whether they have started employment, or whether they are in New Zealand or offshore.<sup>21</sup> Currently the offence only captures situations where people are actively working in New Zealand where the employer is the one charging the fee. We support these changes.

### Corporate oversight of labour practices within supply chains

38. New Zealanders have a strong sense of what is right. We want to know that the people travelling here for work are being treated fairly. We also have an expectation that New Zealand businesses will do everything in their power to ensure that they are not supporting or facilitating organised crime.
39. There are currently limited incentives for legitimate New Zealand businesses to seek an assurance from their subcontractors that the labour the subcontractor employs is legal. This is especially the case in sectors such as horticulture and construction. They are

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<sup>21</sup> [Immigration \(Fiscal Sustainability and System Integrity\) Amendment Bill](#) (Government Bill).

not under any obligation to manage these risks across their supply chain, unlike other regimes such as health and safety or food safety.<sup>22</sup>

40. While these companies are entitled to focus on their bottom line, for companies to be wilfully blind to migrant exploitation within their operations, goes against New Zealanders ethical standards.
41. It is also anti-competitive – legitimate businesses who pay their employees legally will be commercially challenged by businesses who are able to cut labour costs by relying on exploited migrant workers.
42. Enforcement agencies we have spoken to in Australia have provided a chilling warning about how bad this problem can become if unchecked. They described industries in Australia where the labour force is heavily reliant on exploited migrants under the control of organised crime.
43. A model of good behaviour is Zespri, which is taking a proactive approach by seeking assurance from its subcontractors. But the challenge that Zespri faces is the cost of marking itself against this higher standard when others don't. Zespri has shown that it can be done. We think it is time that other operators were held to the same standards.

#### **Kiwifruit Industry Labour Compliance Framework**

This framework requires all growers and contractors to uphold ethical labour practices through mandatory GLOBALG.A.P. and GRASP certification, which are independently audited to ensure food safety, environmental sustainability and worker welfare.<sup>23</sup>

The framework incorporates the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) programme to support Pacific seasonal workers and mandates Zespri's Labour Contractor Verification System for all orchard contractors and directly employing growers.

Beyond compliance, the industry takes proactive steps to prevent exploitation, including collaboration with independent investigators, enforcement actions such as revoking certifications and rejecting non-compliant produce, and adherence to private assurance standards.

Additional safeguards include a Supplier Code of Conduct, financial monitoring to detect tax evasion, mandatory SMETA audits, and confidential reporting mechanisms, all reflecting the industry's commitment to continuous improvement and the protection of workers' rights throughout the supply chain.

44. While a reporting and disclosure mechanism is a good start, we recommend requiring high-risk industries to actively identify, prevent, mitigate and account for the integrity of their supply chains. This would set an obligation on businesses to proactively manage

<sup>22</sup> These obligations could include, mandatory reporting requirements or regulatory compliance frameworks, such as the Zespri example below.

<sup>23</sup> [GLOBALG.A.P.](#) is an international certification system ensuring good agricultural practices, including food safety, environmental sustainability, and worker health and safety. GRASP (GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice) is a complementary module that evaluates social practices at the farm level, focusing on workers' welfare, health, and safety.

migrant exploitation risks that would be subject to legal liability and regulatory enforcement.<sup>24</sup>

45. While we are reluctant to place more obligations on business, where those obligations are to address a particular type of offending used by organised crime to exploit vulnerable people, we consider the obligations are appropriate.

## RESILIENCE TO ORGANISED CRIME IN COMMUNITIES

46. Resilience to Organised Crime in Communities (ROCC) is a cross-agency work programme designed to combat domestic organised crime by combining social and economic intervention with targeted enforcement action to build local community resilience.
47. ROCC originated from Police support of community-based methamphetamine harm reduction programmes in the Eastern District. Since 2020, the model has expanded to six further regions – Northland, Counties Manukau (see case study on page 9), Bay of Plenty (see page 6), Porirua, the West Coast and Southland. This represents a mix of communities which are already dealing with deep-rooted organised crime threats, as well as those beginning to show signs of risk, such as Mātaura below.

### Operations Pakari and Whakaahuru - Mātaura

Mātaura is a small town in Southland with a population of approximately 1,740 people. Despite its size, it has faced significant social and criminal challenges, particularly due to the presence of the Mongrel Mob Mātaura, a gang whose 20 members had been responsible for a disproportionate amount of serious and fatal violence in the region.



Operation Pakari was launched by Southern District Police in June 2023, leading to the arrest of 20 individuals on 85 charges, significantly disrupting the Mongrel Mob's activities in the town. The upcoming trial in 2025 is supported by the ROCC programme, which is assisting key witnesses.

**Operation Whakaahuru** was launched alongside Pakari to support the 12 families and 47 children affected by the arrests. Through Family Liaison Officers and collaboration with community services, immediate and long-term needs were addressed. The ROCC programme played a key role in connecting families to support networks, with dedicated funding and staffing ensuring sustained assistance.<sup>25</sup>

48. The ROCC framework is designed to be flexible to enable communities to adapt it to meet their particular needs. But the key objective for all initiatives is to ensure that targeted enforcement actions are combined with effective wraparound interventions that strengthen whānau wellbeing and build community resilience to the conditions that allow organised crime to operate. The services provided through ROCC include, for example: drug and alcohol treatment and harm reduction, rangatahi mentoring, whānau navigation services and prisoner reintegration.

<sup>24</sup> This would align more closely to the European Union's [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#), which is widely regarded as the world's most comprehensive modern slavery due diligence framework.

<sup>25</sup> Rachael Kelly (20 June 2023) '[Whānau support programme rolled out during Southland gang raids](#)' *The Southland Times*.

49. ROCC provides a strong foundation within communities to support targeted law enforcement operations - as outlined in the case studies from Ōpōtiki and Mātāura above. Senior Police leaders have said that they expect the principles of ROCC to be considered as a part of any major operations against organised crime.

### Sustainable funding

50. We encourage continuation of the ROCC cross-agency work programme to build local community resilience to organised crime. This will be important to strengthen the community voice by establishing consistent partnerships and contact points within communities to foster trust and collaboration across the various community and agency-based networks that will need to work together.
51. ROCC supported programmes have been funded through a mix of different arrangements, including regional development funds managed by the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment, MSD contracts (\$27.8 million from the Community Resilience and Whānau Support Fund) and through Police (\$3.4 million).
52. We understand that current funding is time limited and will cease by the end of this financial year. There is an opportunity to present a case for future investment through Budget 2026, alongside wider TSOC and Social Investment work. We support those programmes, which have demonstrated success in reducing the harms from organised crime.

### Focus on the work that will stop organised crime

53. ROCC's holistic, community-empowered approach is a key strength. But it also presents a potential risk. There is a risk that the focus could shift towards broader social issues, such as poverty and inequality. These are important for addressing some of the root causes of crime but are far beyond the scope of an organised crime response.
54. That is why it is critical to manage ROCC's position at the interface between organised crime and the wider social sector network, through alignment with the Social Investment Approach and the continued involvement of Regional Public Service Commissioners.<sup>26</sup> Aligning with the Social Investment Approach will support a coordinated and outcomes-focused approach across the wider network of social provision which will also support TSOC strategic objectives.<sup>27</sup>
55. In some cases, it may be more effective to take a narrower, enforcement-led approach – especially where there is established organised crime groups and already a mature network of social service provision in place. For example, Clear, Hold, Build (CHB) is a place-based, three-phase operational framework developed by the UK Home Office to reduce serious and organised crime in high-harm areas. It aims to:
- **Clear:** Disrupt and remove organised crime groups.

<sup>26</sup> [Regional Public Service Commissioners \(RPSCs\)](#) are senior public servants appointed to lead and coordinate public services within specific regions. They play a key role in coordinating the delivery of resources through existing leadership structures.

<sup>27</sup> The analytical approach used in the Social Investment framework leverages linked administrative data from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) to identify patterns and predictors of long-term social outcomes. By applying statistical and longitudinal analysis to de-identified individual-level data across sectors (e.g. health, education, justice), researchers can assess risk factors and inform targeted, evidence-based policy interventions.



- **Hold:** Stabilise the area and prevent re-infiltration.
  - **Build:** Rebuild community resilience and prevent future harm.
56. CHB aims not only to disrupt criminal networks but also to create lasting safety and resilience by involving local agencies and residents in the process. The model is designed as an end-to-end partnership approach that is scalable and adaptable to different contexts. The successful Operation Highwater in Opotiki took this approach.
57. A 2024 evaluation found that CHB had a statistically significant impact on reducing crime (when implemented as intended) and it is effective in embedding a coordinated multi-agency response to organised crime. But there was less evidence that it had an impact on engaging communities into the response.<sup>28</sup>

## EDUCATION

58. Social attitudes towards behaviours like drink driving or smoking have radically shifted over the past forty years. Whereas once these were accepted as normal behaviour, they are now generally socially unacceptable. In comparison, many of the harms caused by organised crime (such as the use of illicit drugs or illegal labour) are either invisible to the public or victims are stigmatised or seen as complicit. For our communities to be able to help with the response to the increasing threats posed by organised crime, the communities must:
- a. understand the effects of crime on their community
  - b. understand and be able to identify the drivers of crime
  - c. know who and how to report organised crime activities
59. This is not about preaching right from wrong. It is about providing communities with the information they need to understand what is happening in their back yards, why it is happening, how they can help to reduce the harm and be part of the solution. This is also important as a means of informing and responding to community expectations – that may well inform the social licence for actions that may be required.
60. For example:
- a. With supply of illicit drugs into our communities, people should understand the harm that drugs are causing and what drives people to supply drugs into our communities. Only then can they begin to help with the response to those harms, whether that is assisting law enforcement, engaging health responses for users or providing support networks to reduce the customer base for organised crime.
  - b. For migrant exploitation, people should be educated to spot concerning business practices that might involve situations of exploitation of migrant workers.
  - c. For targeting fraud, people should be educated to protect themselves against forms of fraud such as online scams but also be able to spot others who might be vulnerable to scams and be able to support those potential victims to protect themselves against this threat.

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<sup>28</sup> UK Home Office (2025) [Evaluation of Clear, Hold, Build: A local response to serious and organised crime](#)



61. The approach to education is not one size fits all. It should be tailored to local community issues and local community solutions. This should be guided by the national strategy and the local frameworks developed as part of the community involvement in targeting organised crime.
62. Sharing intelligence and data with communities is a powerful way of gaining support and for the system-wide response. This equips local leaders to identify gaps and vulnerabilities, respond to emerging needs and improve performance. There would be considerable value in creating a public-facing data platform that provides an integrated view of the state of communities. While that may be a long-term project, we know that agencies do produce assessment reports that are valuable for local leaders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

63. We set out the actions that we recommend below. We will revisit some of these themes in future reports on information sharing and accountability.

### Integrating community responses within a national TSOC strategy

64. We recommend that the refreshed TSOC strategy should take a prevention-focused approach by setting directions for both enforcement and community actions, including harm reduction and demand minimisation. This should include appropriate oversight over implementation and delivery of the strategy.
65. While community responses should be informed by the national strategy, they should be designed and delivered in ways that best meet the needs of different communities.
66. We expect there to be a clear focus on performance and system level outcomes across all parts of the system (which we will explore further in August).

### Preventing drug crime

67. We recommend:
  - a. reducing the stigma around being a drug user to encourage users to seek help
  - b. investing in the availability of effective addiction treatment services to remove the customers of drug crime
  - c. considering wider rollout of alternative treatment models and criminal justice pathways for users, such as Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Courts.

### Preventing migrant exploitation

68. We recommend:
  - a. Clarifying mandates between MBIE and Police for taking the lead on human trafficking offences to improve effectiveness of responses.
  - b. That MBIE maintain focus on updating systems and processes (our August report will address the accountabilities that should be put in place to ensure this occurs).
  - c. Requiring high-risk industries to actively identify, prevent, mitigate and account for the integrity of their supply chains, and making them subject to legal liability and regulatory enforcement similar to workplace health and safety.

### **Resilience to organised crime in communities**

69. We recommend:

- a. That efforts to build the resilience of communities against organised crime (such as the ROCC model) should be a fundamental part of TSOC strategy.
- b. Providing a sustainable funding model through the frameworks set by the Social Investment Agency. This should remove siloes in the NGO sector and support a coordinated and outcomes-focused approach across the wider network of social provision which will support TSOC strategic objectives.
- c. That Police consider the potential for incorporating and integrating the Clear, Hold Build model as part of targeted law enforcement-led operations.

### **Education**

70. We recommend taking action to shift public attitudes towards the victims of organised crime to ensure that New Zealanders:

- a. understand the effects of organised crime on their community
- b. can identify and report instances of organised crime activity.