

# **The Drug and Alcohol Treatment Unit in Rimutaka Prison, Upper Hutt, Wellington.**

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## Introduction

In accepting the invitation to address this seminar, I have permission from the Department of Corrections to speak on my areas of expertise, and to be circumspect on other matters. My hope is that you will find useful something I might say in continuing the debate on reform for which Quakers are well-known.

At the outset I would emphasise that over the last few generations the work of the prison has evolved beyond recognition. From punitive substrates, the modern jail is an education training venue for printing, food, engineering, building, painting, and farming industries. It also sets out to meet the mental health and rehabilitation needs of the inmate population. It tries to provide treatment for sexual offenders, the violent, drug abusers, gamblers and those with other addictive and anti-social behaviours, including the increasing number of the elderly. It is also a place where the mentally unwell and suicidal are often housed to get the special help they need.

In this talk I shall allude to the increasing muster of prisoners, the treatment of those drug and alcohol, and mention some of the more pernicious drugs known colloquially as ‘**N-bombs**’ that have come onto the market recently. Then I shall focus on the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Unit at Rimutaka Prison with which I am most involved.

The result, I hope, might go some way to meeting your expectations.

## **The rising number of inmates**

Regrettably, [prison musters are rising alarmingly](#). You might well wonder how can this be – but from my own observations the answer lies in a combination of:

1. Tougher sentencing – 150 cases
2. Higher thresholds for granting bail – 200 cases
3. Longer intervals (up to five years) between Parole Board hearings

4. Higher thresholds for granting parole – 100 cases
5. Three strikes legislation – 240 cases
6. The importation of offender Australians – 70 cases
7. Probation Officers becoming more risk averse and recommending to the Judge a safer option of imprisonment to avoid heavy criticism when they get it wrong – 100 cases.

Thus we have a total increase of 860 offenders for whom yet another prison must be built to accommodate them. For a moment I leave you to speculate on the personal, societal and financial costs of such a development, while I turn to the treatment of prisoners known to be addicted to drugs and alcohol

### **Drug and alcohol dependent prisoners**

The specific topic is highlighted because two-thirds of the country's present 9236 prisoners are known to have substance abuse problems, and they form part of the more than 50% of all offenders who have committed crimes when under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. It follows that increasing alcohol and drug treatment is one of ways that Corrections might reduce rates of re-offending.

I shall comment on the outcome of such treatment, and the benefit of extending it further to the vast number of prisoners in need.

But first I shall draw your attention to the so-called N-Bombs – the latest component of the unlawful industry that develops and supplies the narcotics that the addicts, the community, and the treatment agencies are up against.

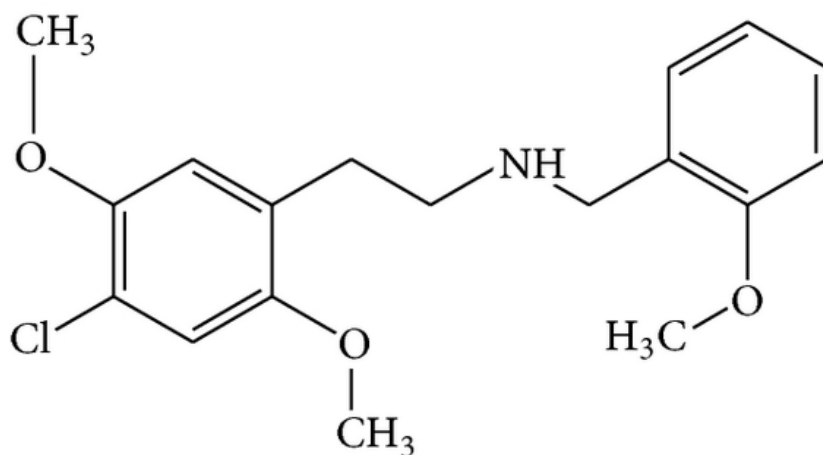
### **The production of 'N-bombs'**

The general population cannot but be aware of the corrosive and frequently tragic effects of drug and alcohol addiction. There is the daily bombardment from the news media to warn about drug smuggling at the borders, drug manufacture/sale and distribution being uncovered, violence committed between rival sectors of that industry, as well as by customers out of control. It raises troublesome issues for others who yearn for a less threatening society.

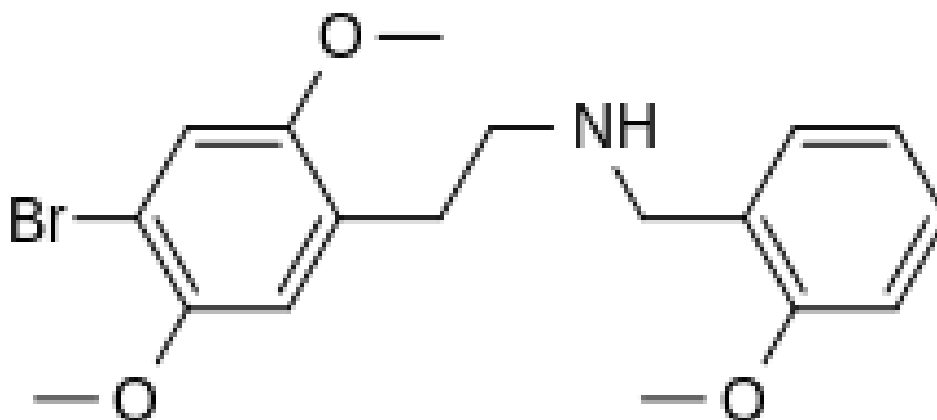
New drugs are also constantly being manufactured for consumption by chemists on the street. The latest to command attention is a dangerous synthetic substance known as **N-bomb C**. The compound is so-named because it uses Chlorine. Its effects are so dangerous as to be banned everywhere, outlawed.

To explain the matter a little further I allude to the well-known Periodic Table. The column to note is that containing Halides, Fluorine Chlorine, Bromine and Iodine. First the chemists produced the compound known as **N-Bomb** to attract the attention of those desperate to experience unusual sensations.

Periodic Table																	
H 1																	He 2
Li 3	Be 4	The Royal Society of Chemistry's interactive periodic table features history, alchemy, podcasts, videos, and data trends across the periodic table. Click the tabs at the top to explore each section. Use the buttons above to change your view of the periodic table and view Murray Robertson's stunning Visual Elements artwork. Click each element to read detailed information.										B 5	C 6	N 7	O 8	F 9	Ne 10
Na 11	Mg 12											Al 13	Si 14	P 15	S 16	Cl 17	Ar 18
K 19	Ca 20	Sc 21	Ti 22	V 23	Cr 24	Mn 25	Fe 26	Co 27	Ni 28	Cu 29	Zn 30	Ga 31	Ge 32	As 33	Se 34	Br 35	Kr 36
Rb 37	Sr 38	Y 39	Zr 40	Nb 41	Mo 42	Tc 43	Ru 44	Rh 45	Pd 46	Ag 47	Cd 48	In 49	Sn 50	Sb 51	Te 52	I 53	Xe 54
Cs 55	Ba 56	La 57	Hf 72	Ta 73	W 74	Re 75	Os 76	Ir 77	Pt 78	Au 79	Hg 80	Tl 81	Pb 82	Bi 83	Po 84	At 85	Rn 86
Fr 87	Ra 88	Ac 89	Rf 104	Db 105	Sg 106	Bh 107	Hs 108	Mt 109	Ds 110	Rg 111	Cn 112	Uut 113	Fl 114	Uup 115	Lv 116	Uus 117	Uuo 118



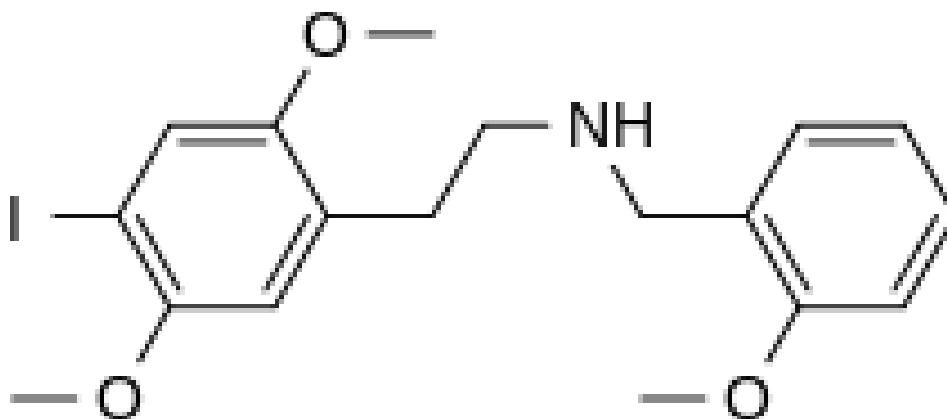
Then the chemists moved down one row to substitute Bromine. The result led to the production of **N Bomb-B** – a Peyote type of hallucinogen that induces tragic side effects such as attempting to fly.



The ‘manufacturers’ then returned to Mendeleev’s chart, and moved down one row to introduce Iodine. The result was an **N Bomb-I** in the form of an LSD type trip that delayed the onset for several hours (and became a trap for the impatient). The effects could last for days, and end in admission to the Accident and Emergency wards of hospitals.

Users say things like:

“My whole life was a preparation for this moment. The rest of my life can only be an anti-climax”



Personally, I don't believe that decent, ordinary folks need such a "Charlie Chaplin" moment, or that our society offers such grinding humiliation to make any escape worth-while even for a short time. Yet the queues outside drug retailers defy my beliefs.

### **Drug and Alcohol Treatment Units (DTU)**

Currently there are nine specialist DTUs in NZ prisons, in eight of which Care NZ is contracted to deliver drug and alcohol treatment programmes, while Odyssey House is contracted to deliver programmes in Auckland Prison.

The first of such units was created in Aroha Women's Prison Corrections in 1997. It operated under the auspices of the National Association of Alcohol and Drug Addictions, and provided programmes of either three or six month's duration, depending on the degree of addiction and criminal involvement of participants.

The programmes work when a community of prisoners, staff and a few selected prisoner/mentor graduates is created to enable prisoners to feel safe in raising and addressing personal issues. The successful metier resembles that of a traditional Therapeutic Community. It provides a supportive and caring environment in which participants can raise highly charged and life-changing emotional events that need to be dealt with. In short, it enables them to recognise and cope with the trigger points in their lives that otherwise might cause them to relapse.

Prisoners who successfully complete such a course gain the skills and techniques that help them to remain drug-free. They are then ready to be recommended for parole under supervision in selected places in the community.

At this point I shall mention the programme with which I am involved in Rimutaka Prison.

### **Rimutaka Prison's DTU**



Rimutaka is New Zealand's largest Prison. It cares for some of our most difficult citizens. It has been regarded as notorious, but the reputation is not deserved, despite some criticism around high assault rates. It has operated DTU programmes since 2007

Since inception, DTU treatment has been available for about 840 prisoners. Segregated prisoners form about half of that number, and mainstream prisoners the balance. The DTU programme is of 6 months duration, and is delivered in a separate 60 bed unit within the mainstream prison.

In working with this population I have found it helpful to follow the guidelines presented by Mason Durries, Kohlberg, and Johari.

Mason Durries describes the four pillars of the house as being mental, psychological, social and spiritual. Kohlberg requires me a) to seek the best decision I can make with the prisoner to create a short term

management plan for correcting poor behaviour; b) to consult and seek consensus with all stakeholders; and c) to consider whether my decision is fair, legal, and able to stand any level of scrutiny.

Kohlberg gives a basis for moral decision making and Johari provides the following template for documenting personal perceptions that otherwise might be difficult to grasp.

**Johari Window**

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Arena	Blind Spot
Not Known to Others	Façade	Unknown

**Assessing the effectiveness of the DTU programme**

The most recent Corrections data available for Rimutaka AOD Unit indicates that it reduces re-offending by 30%. It follows that similar results would accrue if the Unit were simply doubled in size.

Hence, taking a crime inventory across sixty prisoners in my care today, extrapolating the annual community crime cost according to NZ Treasury, and using the Desistance Theory of Shad Marina to see a career criminal’s damage to a Community, suggests that by doubling the DTU services, in monetary terms alone, the cumulative savings would amount to over \$170 million per year!

## **Overview**

Finally, I would say that the resulting loss of freedom and privileges necessitated by imprisonment can be restored in the same way as an immigrant might receive New Zealand Citizenship. This idea is part of the graduation ceremony that occurs on the successful completion of a course in Rimutaka Prison.

On such occasions their Worships the Mayor of Lower Hutt City, Ray Wallace, and the Mayor of Upper Hutt City, where Rimutaka is situated, Wayne Guppy, offer a welcoming hand to the graduates. They are friends of the prison and supporters of the Restoration of Rights to graduating prisoners. Professor Tony Taylor has supported the concept from the outset, and has attended almost all graduations with one or other of the Mayors. On occasion, when neither can participate, he has represented them and delivered praise for the progress made and encouragement for the path ahead. Thanks to the Quakers, he is concerned about helping families visit and share in the graduation celebrations.

Thank you.

I look forward to elaborating for you on any points you may care to raise.