NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE BUREAU

2006 CLANDESTINE DRUG LABORATORY (CLAN LAB) REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of information related to the dismantling of clan labs by New Zealand Police during the 2006 calendar year.

'Official' clan lab recording began in 1996. A single clan lab was dismantled in that year. Since then, clan lab numbers have increased significantly with around 200 labs being located each year since 2003.

February 2006 saw the detection of New Zealand's 1000th clan lab. Perhaps indicative of the overall clan lab situation, this lab was located in a vehicle during a routine traffic stop and while most equipment, materials and substances were present it was relatively small and clearly quite mobile. The suspected cook was a 36 year old male with gang associations, though not reported as having direct membership. He has an extensive history of offending across a number of crime types - including the 'high volume' types of burglary, motor vehicle theft, and assaults - and also extensive traffic offence history.

Throughout this report the use of the term dismantle (dismantling, etc.) refers to the process employed when a clan lab is detected and responded to by the NCLRT. While some confusion may exist over, for example, a clan lab that is not set up at the time of detection being 'dismantled', this reflects the evidential process NZP undertakes in respect of such clan labs where each clan lab needs to be processed. It should, therefore be seen as encompassing more than the simple 'taking apart' of an already set up clan lab.

CLAN LABS DISMANTLED

A total of 211 clan labs were dismantled by New Zealand Police in 2006, predominantly aimed at the manufacture of methamphetamine. This represents a 3.43% increase over 2005 and is also the highest number of labs detected in any calendar year.

As can be seen in Fig. 1, there has been a slow but steady overall increase in clan lab numbers since 2003, following the dramatic increases during the 1999-2002 period.

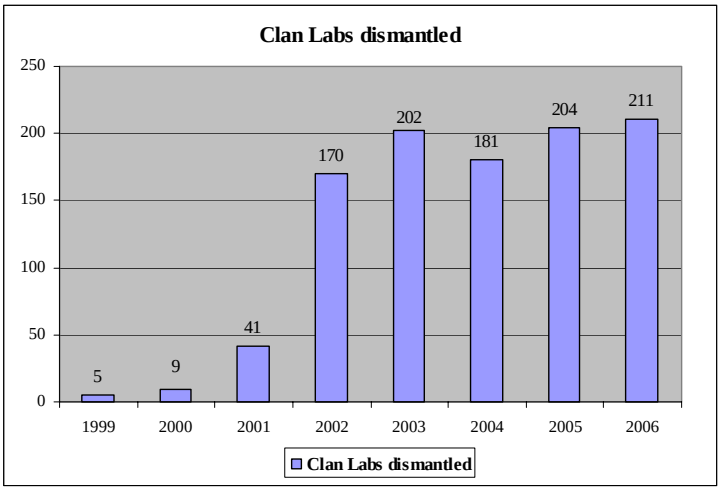

Figure 1 - Clandestine laboratories dismantled 1999 - 2006

Clan labs were found in every Police District although the prevalence of labs is significantly higher in the northern half of the North Island - i.e., the six Police districts covered by the clan lab response teams based at AMCOS in Auckland (Northland, Waitematā, Auckland City, Counties/Manukau, Waikato and Bay of Plenty).

However, within this group, there was an apparent 'southern drift' of clan labs from the three northernmost districts, Northland, Auckland City and the traditional clan lab heartland of Waitematā District (previously North Shore/Waitakere/Rodney District (NSWR)) into the Counties/Manukau, Waikato and Bay of Plenty districts.

Figure 2, below, provides a breakdown of the laboratories dismantled by Police district in 2006. Table 1, which follows, then provides a comparison of the total percentage of clan labs within each district in 2006 compared to 2005.

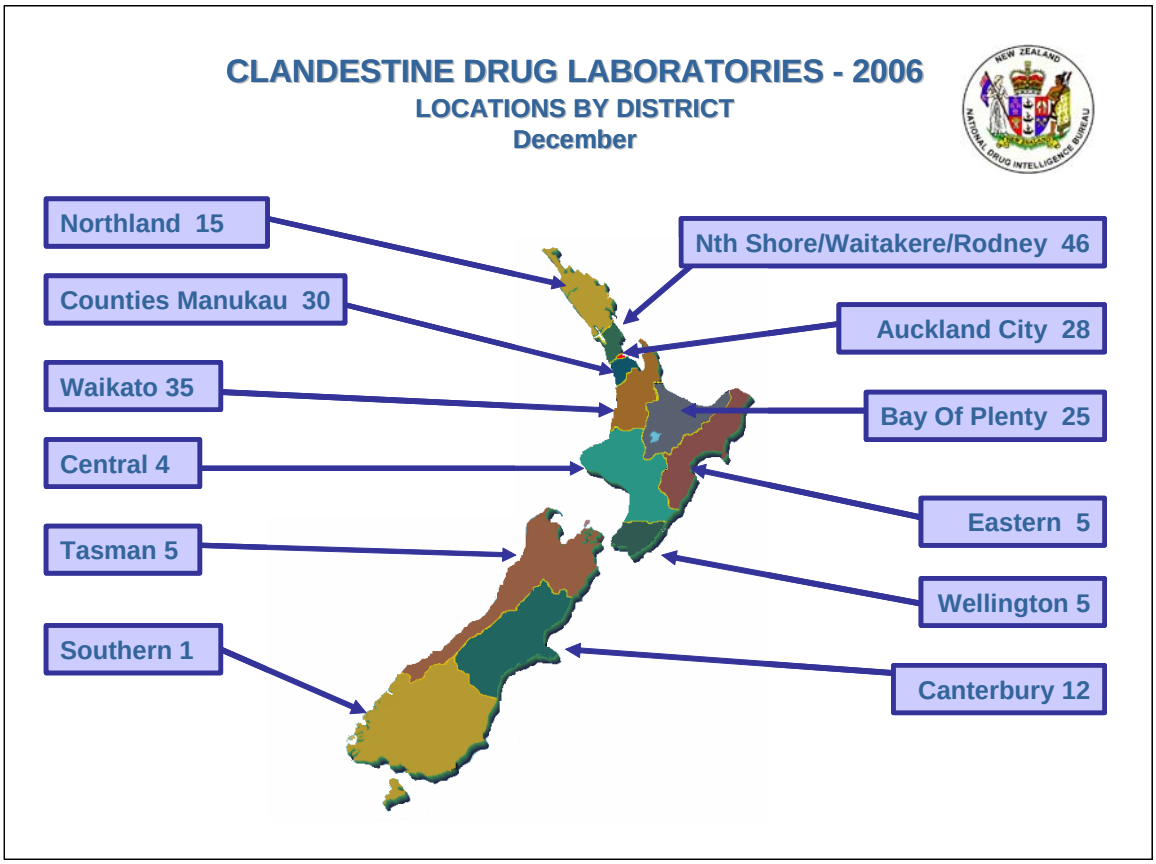

Figure 2 - Clan labs dismantled by Police District in 2006

It should be noted that, despite the foregoing, Waitematā still remains the lead district for clan lab dismantling with almost half as many again as their nearest 'rival', Waikato.

District	2005	% of total	2006	% of total	% change
Northland	20	9.80	15	7.11	-2.69
Waitematā	54	26.47	46	21.80	-4.67
Auckland City	31	15.20	28	13.27	-1.93
Counties Manukau	21	10.29	30	14.22	3.92
Waikato	23	11.27	35	16.59	5.31
Bay of Plenty	12	5.88	25	11.85	5.97
Eastern	5	2.45	5	2.37	-0.08
Central	6	2.94	4	1.90	-1.05
Wellington	12	5.88	5	2.37	-3.51
Tasman	5	2.45	5	2.37	-0.08
Canterbury	14	6.86	12	5.69	-1.18
Southern	1	0.49	1	0.47	-0.02
TOTALS	**204**		**211**		

Table 1 - Clan lab distribution changes 2005/2006

Whether these figures indicate an emerging trend is unclear. It is possible that the 'southern drift' may be reflective of a shift away from traditional clan lab areas in the far North to the more remote and rural areas in the Counties/Manukau, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty areas.

The table also shows that just as a 'southern drift' has occurred from the far north, so too has a 'northern drift' occurred from further south, with all Police districts from Eastern and Central south, noting a decrease in the overall percentage of labs dismantled within those districts.

CLAN LAB GRADINGS

Clan labs are graded within four levels, A through D. Simply though, Grade A constitutes an active (actually operating) lab and Grade D a collection of materials/equipment and/or precursors but clearly short of that required for manufacture or production.

In the 2006 calendar year only one lab did not have a grading noted. This is a significant turnaround on previous years and is reflective of the improvements noted in data collection .

Grades A and B both represent "complete" labs and together represent just under one third of all labs detected. This is relatively consistent with 2005 and is understood to be relatively consistent with Queensland in Australia, where a similar grading system is used, and traditionally a similar number of labs have been found.

Figure 3, overleaf, displays the gradings, as reported.

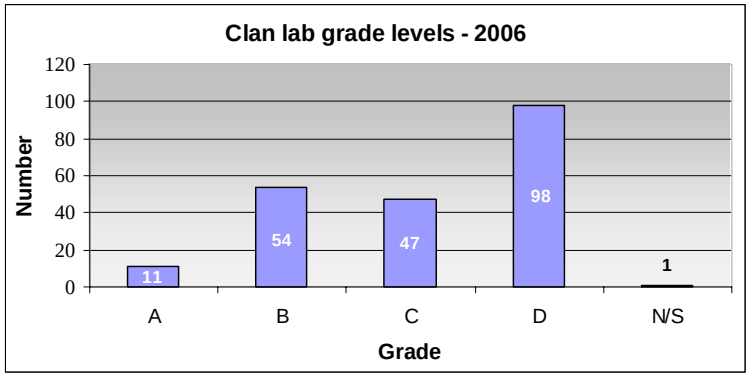

Figure 3 - Clan lab grade levels 2006

There has been a drop in grade C labs and a corresponding increase in grade D labs. However, the proportion of grade C and D labs is almost certainly reflective of the relatively high numbers of labs being located during "other" policing activities (see section on Detection Methods).

CLAN LAB SCENE TYPES

Clan labs are located in a variety of situations, though by far the most common is domestic households. It should be noted that a modicum of 'subjectivity' is required to be applied at times due to the nature of some labs. By way of example, a search of a property may locate a 'clan lab' spread throughout the property, with parts in a motor vehicle, on the property, or in the dwelling itself. In these cases, a decision has been made on which location is the most significant. So, for example, where chemicals are located in the car and the equipment is in the house, the house has been considered the 'primary' scene as that is where the manufacture would most likely have occurred.

The following figure best represents the scene type based on the information available.

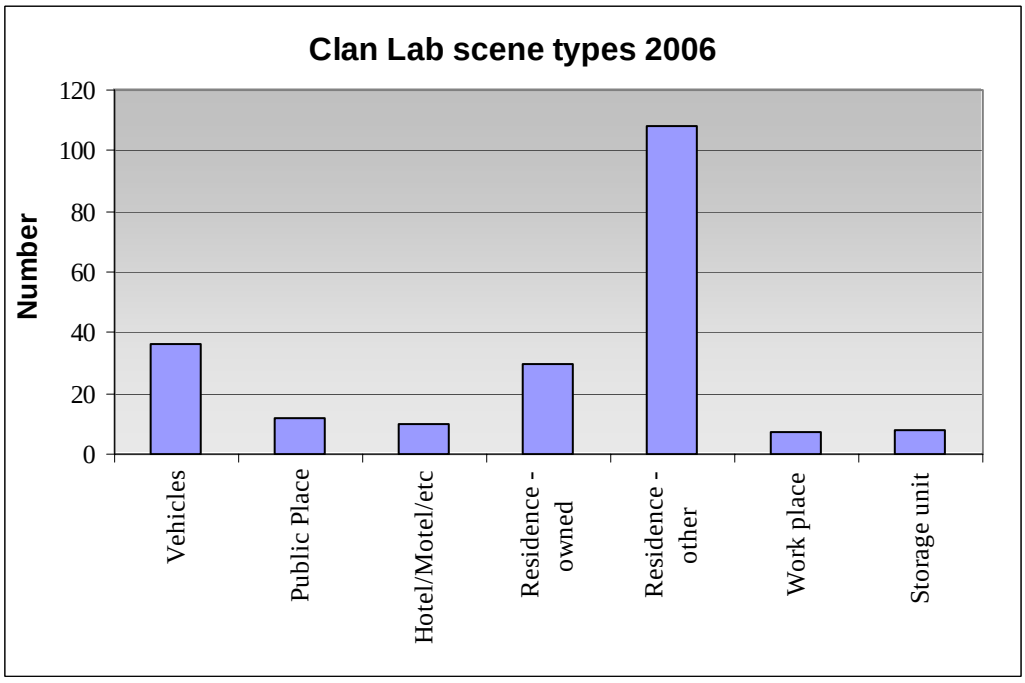

Figure 4 - Clan lab scene types

VEHICLES

The vehicles category is self-explanatory and identifies the significant number of labs located during road policing activity. In the main these are Grade C or D labs and are either 'in transit' between locations, either as chemical or equipment collections, or are being 'stored' (and hence usually incomplete) in the vehicle.

PUBLIC PLACES

Public places have included a range of sites, from collections of chemicals or equipment 'dumped' or hidden in parks or on the side of the road, through to an almost complete clan lab left at a Police Station. Perhaps one of the most concerning within this category though was a lab located in a school playground (see article - obtained from www.nzherald.co.nz). While this was located during a school holiday, the school concerned was running a holiday programme at the time the lab was located.

P lab equipment found in school grounds

Drug-making equipment has been found in the grounds of a Christchurch primary school.

Police were alerted yesterday and found the equipment for making methamphetamine, or P, behind a dumpster and an equipment shed at Windsor School, the *Press* newspaper reported today.

Although students were on school holidays, the P lab equipment was found just metres from where a holiday programme was being held.

Drug squad Detective Sergeant Greg Murton said police were surprised to find specialised glassware and expensive chemicals had been dumped and suspected the offenders had either dumped it because they were worried about being caught, or had left it there to be picked up.

School principal Andy White was upset to see his school used in any way related to drug-making.

"We have never had anything like this happen before but I guess it just reminds you that this kind of thing happens in the community, just not usually on our doorstep."

- NZPA

Article 1 - NZ Herald - 27 September 2006

HOTELS/MOTELS/ETC.

A total of ten clan labs were located in hotels, motels, and other similar accommodation. These labs can be problematic as the accommodation providers effectively have their revenue streams diminished and suffer additional costs in making the rooms/units suitable for reuse as they are obliged to remove possible contamination.

Rooms/units with ducted air conditioning and/or heating can pose further risk as contamination can spread through these. However, as these labs tend to be quite short-term operations there is a 'lesser risk' of ingrained contamination than what might be witnessed in a domestic residence.

RESIDENCES - OWNED

A significant number (30 - 14.2%) of labs were found in residences owned either by the offender or by a family member of the offender. Many of these have resulted in, or are being considered for, proceeds of crime action.

Such properties are also of concern in respect to remediation as there may be little or no incentive to the 'owner' to remediate, particularly if the property is at risk from the proceeds of crime action.

RESIDENCES - OTHER

This category mostly covers residential rental properties, including flats and apartments, though it also includes some cases where an 'owner' could not be identified.

Properties of this type used as clandestine laboratories also create issues over remediation, with property owners (including the government through Housing Corporation of New Zealand) then exposed to the expense of remediating properties that tenants have used for their illicit activity. It is also clear that in some cases the property has been used by friends or associates of the tenant, without the knowledge of the tenant.

The most disconcerting factor of residential properties is that overwhelmingly it is these scenes that have children present who are then exposed to the risks of fire, explosion and exposure to the toxic chemicals used in illicit drug manufacture.

WORK PLACES AND STORAGE UNITS

While these two categories have relatively small numbers, both have sufficient to be of note in their own right. Most labs located at storage units have been found to be stored at these locations rather than being 'operational' sites. Many have also been uncovered as a result of Police activity at other locations identify that the offender's have rented storage units.

Four storage units were identified as clan lab sites in August 2006 following an operation targeting such units. All the units identified were linked back to a single offender who had stored chemicals and equipment in each of the units.

Many of the 'work place' records also link back to relatively small units used as work places by those renting them. Many are also related to vehicle maintenance of one form or another. Of some concern, however, are sites such as one located in August at a courier depot where a package containing a number of chemicals began to leak.

As the brief overview (overleaf) from the responding staff indicates, this incident had perhaps more potential than most to turn to a disastrous situation.

> "Package sent through NZ Couriers from Auckland (travelled by plane) on placing into van for delivery, driver noticed strong chemical smell and developed a headache, returned to depot, took package into office, where office staff also developed headaches and all staff felt nauseous. Police called, package removed from couriers and returned to Nelson Police station in patrol vehicle. Fire staff attended and placed package contents into metal arson tins which were then sealed into plastic bags. On examination of a bottle of Toluene, appears the plastic lid had been compromised allowing liquid to leak, liquid had not escaped the outer courier package only fumes. Package also contained paper towel and toilet paper which appears to have absorbed the spilt liquid. "

Article 2 - Extract from clan lab report

DETECTION METHODS

As indicated earlier, rather than being located through the execution of drug- or clan lab-related search warrants, many labs are detected as a result of "other" policing activity. Figure 5, below, shows the methods of detection.

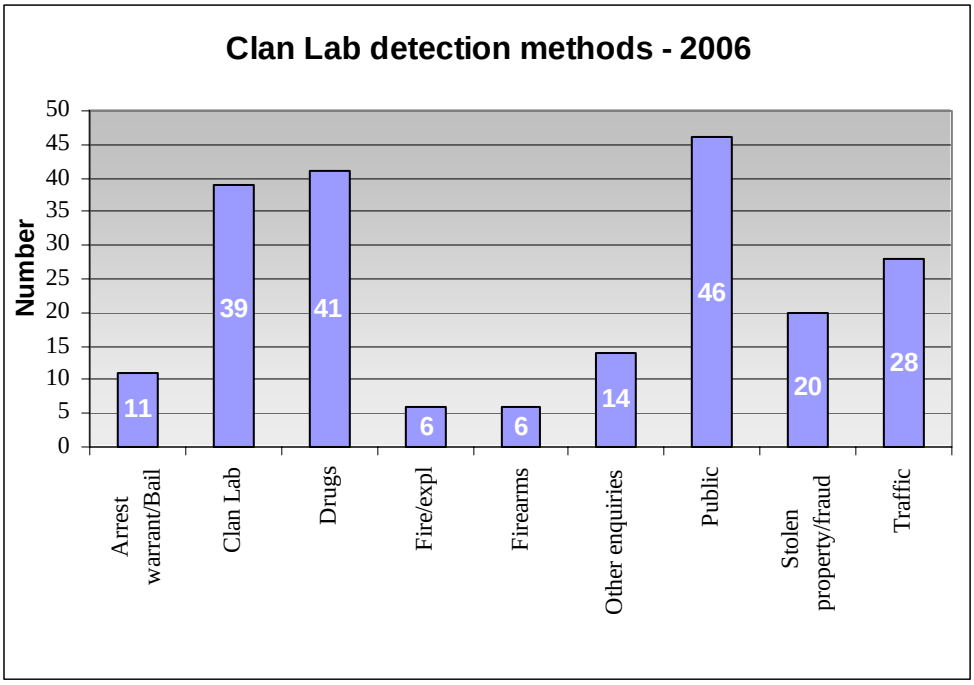

Figure 5 - Clan lab detection methods - 2006

As can be seen, 80 of the 211 clan labs detected in 2006 (c. 40%) were largely the result of policing activity directly focussed on drug-related offending. Conversely this indicates that 60% were found as a result of 'other' events or activity that resulted in the identification of a clan lab.

Most prominent amongst these is the 'Public' category, with 46 detections (c. 22%) attributed to it. These vary from landlords reporting suspicious chemical/equipment located in rental properties and general public reporting of suspicious items or activity, through to what is noted as 'informant information'.

The fourth most common detection method during 2006 was 'Traffic'. Many of these relate to vehicle turnovers following erratic driving behaviour or as a result of suspicious chemical smells or the smell of cannabis emanating from the vehicle while Police are speaking to the occupants. A few have involved stolen vehicles and vehicles involved in accidents.

Investigations relating to stolen property or fraud, detections during 'other enquiries', and the execution of arrest warrants or the conducting of bail checks have also been common and significant contributors to the total.

The execution of warrants relating to illegal firearm possession has also resulted in the detection of clan labs. A relatively small number (6) were also identified through fire or explosion - exclusively at residential properties. Almost double this number of lab scenes showed signs of previous fires or likely explosions (or both) having occurred at

the address. These figures continue to highlight the dangers of clan labs to law enforcement, emergency response personnel, the public at large, and the offenders and their families/fellow occupants.

The detection methods identified remain relatively consistent when compared to data from 2005, particularly in that around 40% in that year were also identified through drug- and clan lab-related policing. There is a greater range of movement in other detection methods.

CLAN LAB TYPES AND PROCESSES

The 211 labs reported have been, or are suspected as having been, related to the manufacture of methamphetamine. However, due to the high proportion of (incomplete) level C and D labs this cannot be stated definitively. In fact, of the 211, 111 (53%) are of an unknown type (86), no type is stated (14), or they are noted as 'other' with no further clarification (11).

However, of the remaining 100 labs, 34 were both conducting methamphetamine reactions and pseudoephedrine extractions (16%), 53 were methamphetamine reaction labs (25%) and 13 (6%) were pseudoephedrine extractions.

Another 8 labs were detected as "poppy seed bake" labs, but these are not included within the 211 as they were not manufacturing synthetic drugs (these are discussed later in the report).

Methamphetamine 'cooks' may use more than one process to manufacture methamphetamine with the method employed dependent on the chemicals available. The three most common processes encountered in New Zealand involve phosphorous and iodine (in one form or another) in conjunction with pseudoephedrine.

The most common process by far is the "hypo method", identified on 77 occasions. This method uses hypophosphorous acid and iodine. In more recent times, this process has also been noted using phosphorous acid.

The second most common method uses Red Phosphorous and Iodine and was noted on 17 occasions. Red Phosphorous is commonly found as the 'striker' on matchboxes or as a component of flares.

The third most common method employs Red Phosphorous in combination with Hydriodic Acid (Hydrogen Iodide) and was identified as a process on 9 occasions.

Aside from the other risks, phosphorous-based methods have two significant inherent risks

- explosion - overheated red phosphorous becomes white phosphorous which can be explosive in contact with air, and
- 'gassing' - heated phosphorous can produce phosphine gas which has previously been used as a chemical weapon and can kill with exposure in only a few parts per million in the surrounding atmosphere.

The Nazi (or Birch) method was identified on one occasion. This method is common in the United States and has been attributed as the cause of many clan lab explosions

there. This is due to the highly volatile and unstable reaction mixture created during the manufacturing process. This method also has significant contamination risk attached with the use of heavy metals (such as lithium extracted from batteries).

PSEUDOEPHEDRINE PRODUCTS LOCATED AT CLAN LABS

Indications are that the continuing high frequency and volume of border seizures of pseudoephedrine-based medicines (primarily Contac*NT*) have led to a perception that imported product has taken over from domestically diverted product as the main pseudoephedrine (PSE) source for domestic methamphetamine manufacture.

However, a closer examination of available clan lab data has shown that this is not the case.. Examination of the data presented for PSE located at clan labs shows that, from the 211 labs, reports indicate that more than half either did not have a PSE product present (87) or did not state whether or not PSE was present (31).

Of the balance (93) a further 20 identified the presence of an over-the-counter (OTC) PSE product but did not provide further detail.

One further report noted Ma Huang (ephedra plant) as the PSE source.

The remaining 72 reports identified a total of 119 OTC PSE medicines either individually or in combination at clan lab scenes. Only 17 of these were Contac*NT*..

In addition to Contac*NT*, single seizures were made of *Logicin, Tylenol* and *Parke Davis Day & Night* which are all flu remedies not available in New Zealand and which are therefore most likely to have been imported.

Twenty two (22) seizures were made of Actifed tablets. These are available domestically and have also been noted amongst New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS) seizures. There was no significant difference established between the tablets seized at importation and those available domestically and therefore it is difficult to establish the source of these.

However, removing the above products from the reported 119 shows that the remaining 77 were all most likely sourced from domestic diversion that occurred within New Zealand. On this basis, 65% of **identified** PSE product located at New Zealand clan labs is sourced domestically, 17% is imported, and the source of the remainder (18%) cannot be determined.

CHILDREN

While poorly researched in the New Zealand situation, there are significant risk factors for children at clan lab scenes. These include exposure to toxic chemicals and the inherent dangers from fire or explosion - compounded by fact that the parents and/or caregivers of these children are likely to also be methamphetamine users.

In 2006 reports from 45 clan labs noted that children lived at the clan lab scene. Only one report of the total 211 did not indicate whether or not children were resident.

Given that 138 of the clan labs were residences this means that almost 1 in 3 clan labs located at a dwelling had children resident at the address.

In addition to these, there were also labs located at a school (see above), a holiday park and hotels/motels where children were either known to be, or were likely to have been present, and therefore also exposed to be at some degree of risk.

Focussing solely on those cases where children resided at the scene, the children were actually present in 34 cases (about 3 in every 4). Over 90 children were identified (with some reports not indicating the number and/or ages of the children). Where an age was identified, almost one third (29/90) of those children were under the age of five. These children are most at risk of exposure, not only because they tend to spend more time within the residence, but also as they develop through early learning are more susceptible to contamination through 'exploring' and the greater risks of hand-to-mouth contamination.

A further third (approximately) of the children were of primary/intermediate school age.

It should be noted also that as the age of the child increases, their knowledge of what is going on increases and so additional risks, such as the normalisation of illicit drug manufacture and use, become more embedded. It is also common for a range of criminal behaviours to manifest at, or around, clan labs - and so exposure to risks associated with these behaviours, along with the normalisation of criminal activity also become increasingly embedded.

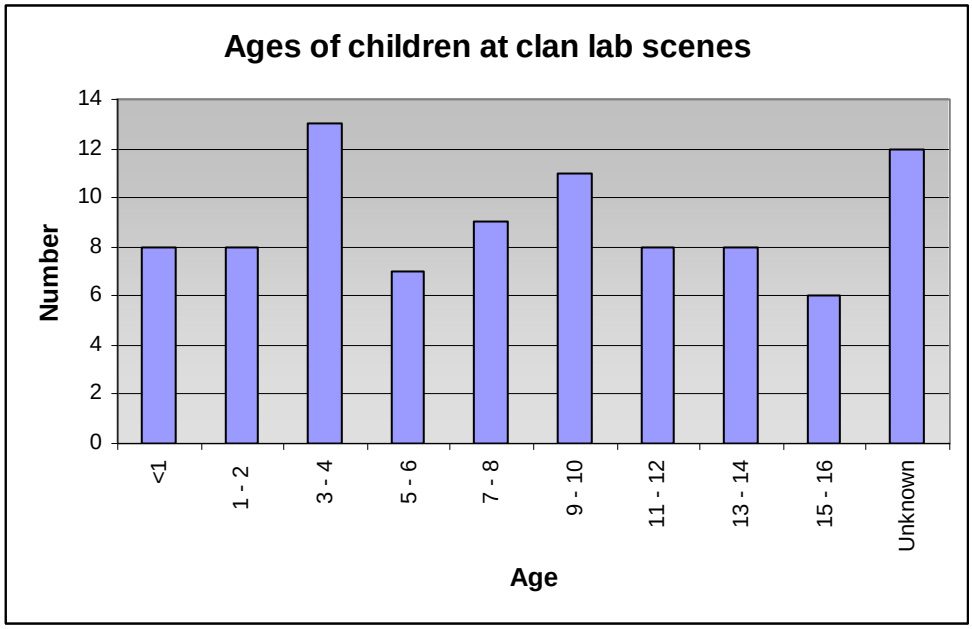

Figure 6 - Ages of children at clan lab scenes - 2006

New Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the National Clandestine Laboratory Response Team (NCLRT) relating to children have been drafted which would improve liaison with support agencies and allow for more detailed information collection around children and clan labs.

CLAN LABS AND WEAPONS

Weapons are relatively common at clan lab scenes, with roughly one in three (65/211) reports noting their presence. The range of weapons located is significant, from knives and swords through pistols and rifles to military style semi-automatic rifles (MSSA). In addition to these weapons, NZP also find other weapons such as stun guns, batons, cross bows and even explosives, including Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). Imitation weapons and a device made to look like an IED were also located.

Further, it is quite common that, where weapons or explosives are found, more than a single weapon is present.

Based on the information available NZP encountered the following weapons or explosives at clan lab scenes:

WEAPON	**NUMBER**
Shotguns	23*
Machetes/knives/swords	19*
Rifles	20*
Explosives/IED	19+
Pistols	13+
Air pistols/rifles	8
Other firearms (type **and** no. not stated)	5#
Other weapons	9
* indicates more weapons were actually located than are stated + indicates inclusion of imitation devices/weapons # indicates number of cases, not number of weapons	

Table 2 - Weapons/explosives located at clan lab scenes

The high prevalence of weapons and explosives at clan lab scenes provides significant additional risk to those involved in the dismantling of clan labs, but most particularly to those tasked with the initial entry and immediate detention/removal of offenders.

DRUGS LOCATED

Reporting shows that no drugs were located at 69 of the 211 detected clan labs and a further 51 did not state whether or not drugs were located.

The remaining reports show a range of class A, B and C controlled drugs, the principal ones located being cannabis (59) and methamphetamine (51). It is probable that a contributory factor to these drugs being most prevalent is that much targeted drug-policing activity will focus on these substances given their prevalence within the overall New Zealand illicit drug market.

However, given that a relatively high incidence of methamphetamine being located would be expected, the even higher prevalence of cannabis is of note, and indicates significant union between the two illicit drug markets.

Additional drug seizures (all less than 10 incidents each) included "magic mushrooms", LSD, MDMA (ecstasy), GHB (fantasy), morphine sulphate, methadone, cannabis oil and cannabis resin. Prescription medicines, such as ketamine, were also found along with a number of seizures of "unknown tablets".

CLAN LAB OFFENDERS

An analysis of clan lab offenders has some difficulties attached. It is not considered sufficient, for example, to simply identify those charged with manufacturing offences. This is due to a number of factors including, for example, that charges may be laid well after the event following forensics (and hence no charges are yet shown), only one offender may (rightly or wrongly) accept sole responsibility, charges may be laid and withdrawn for a number of reasons, etc.

Therefore, in an effort to gain some insight into clan lab offending, it was considered appropriate to look at the persons identified through clan lab reporting and then exclude those who were noted as not being involved (e.g., owner of a stolen car located at the scene, landlord, etc.), or who were only loosely attached to the clan lab (e.g., car registered to a person not present, family member noted as next of kin, etc.). While there is still a degree of subjectivity involved, it is considered likely that this broader approach would encompass those who knew, were likely to have known, and/or were directly or indirectly involved with the lab itself.

Using this process, offenders were not identified for only 15 of the 211 clan labs. A total of 335 offenders were identified from the remaining 196 clan lab reports.

REPEAT OFFENDERS

One very disconcerting aspect of the data is the number of offenders recognised as having offended in previous years, or as having offended on more than a single occasion in the 2006 year. Occasionally offenders will be linked to multiple lab scenes as a result of operational activity (e.g., where a lab is located in a vehicle and a subsequent search locates a further lab or partial lab at their address). However, it is probably at least equally often the case that offenders linked to multiple labs are actually re-offending while on bail for earlier offences. Limitations of the current systems prevent a ready analysis of this aspect of the data.

For this reason, and given other existing constraints, the offender data for 2006 is presented on a 'total' basis without removal of "duplicates". There is, however, some scope for analysis of 'repeat offender' data.

OFFENDER DEMOGRAPHICS

Most clan lab offenders are European. In fact, it would seem that the percentage of European lab offenders is significantly higher than the proportion of Europeans charged with methamphetamine offences in the 2005 year - 53.74% (582/1083). There is also a higher percentage of Pacific Island (excl. Maori) - 5.37% c.f. 3.69%.

By contrast, Asian and Maori offenders appear to lesser degrees in clan labs than their representation in overall methamphetamine charges. However, it is likely that the number of Asian offenders identified at clan labs has increased over 2005, albeit that the 2005 data remains incomplete and was not analysed in this manner.

Age band	No	%
up to 20	17	5.07
21-25	38	11.34
26-30	53	15.82
31-35	76	22.69
36-40	73	21.79
41-45	40	11.94
46-50	23	6.87
51-55	12	3.58
56-60	2	0.60
over 60		0.30

Sex	No	%
Male	256	76.4
Female	79	23.6

Race	No.	%
European	211	62.99
Maori	92	27.46
Pacific Island	18	5.37
Asian	12	3.58
Not specified	2	0.60

Table 3 - 2006 Clan lab offender demographics

Just over 44.48% of clan lab offenders are between the ages of 31 and 40, while the greater proportion of those charged with methamphetamine offences are in the 20-29 age group (40.7%). This 'age imbalance' could be indicating that, with increasing use and possible increasing addiction as a result, users become manufacturers with time.

Supporting this possibility is that the next largest group charged with methamphetamine offences in 2005 was the 30-39 age group, with a further 33.42% of offences.

OCCUPATIONS

A wide range of occupations were noted for the offenders though, as might be expected, a high proportion of those (45%) were noted as unemployed (126) or beneficiaries (35). A further seventeen persons had their occupation stated as 'unknown'. Persons involved in primary production (e.g., farmers, fisherman), trades (e.g., builders, mechanics, painters), domestic duties and students were the most common other groups but it was not considered this data provides any significant insights.

GANG AFFILIATIONS

In an effort to address the 'anecdotal' position that (recognised) domestic gangs are extensively involved or associated with methamphetamine manufacture a close examination was conducted of identified gang links held by offenders.

These were broken down into three separate groups, those with no identified links (80), those who are loosely associated with gangs through association with members or associates (69), and those who are noted either directly as gang members or as associates of gang members.

As indicated above, just under one quarter of offender's did not have identified links to gangs (80/335 - 24%).

The converse is that gang affiliation was a factor with the remaining 75% of offenders. Many of these offenders have direct links and/or associations to a number of recognised gangs

The relatively high number of notations relating to some gangs likely indicates the extent of their networks as their recognised membership is significantly lower than those of others. The associations across gangs may also facilitate exchanges of information and/or equipment.

No clear links to other crime groups, or trans-national crime groups were evidenced; however, the presence of Contac*NT* at clan lab scenes suggests they exist.

OTHER OFFENDING

As alluded to earlier, while researching organised crime links it became apparent that many clan lab offenders have significant offending history across a range of offences. To give a useful analysis on this currently requires an individual check on the history of each offender and then collation of those results into a meaningful format. This was simply not practicable within the time available.

However, it is considered that a separate analysis would be worthwhile as it would almost certainly show that the targeting of clan lab offenders would probably assist in reducing offending across other crime types, including volume crime.

Such analysis would also likely allow a better analysis of 'repeat offending' and may provide some insight to develop strategies for reducing re-offending.

'POPPY SEED BAKE' LABS AND 'ASSESSMENTS'

In addition to the 211 clan labs, the NZP NCLRT conducted 30 assessments of suspected clan lab sites that were subsequently deemed not to qualify as clan labs. All of these assessments were conducted by the Auckland NCLRT team.

A further 8 clan labs that were extracting morphine from poppy seeds were located in the Canterbury district and were attended by the Wellington NCLRT team.

There are various recipes for "poppy seed bake" but basically the seeds are soaked or boiled in a solution of water and sometimes hydrochloric acid. Anecdotal comment from a Christchurch doctor indicates this process creates some additional health risk to the user as impurities (such as residual sprays and anti-mould agents) are extracted from the seeds. These impurities can significantly aggravate injection sites and also adversely impact on internal organs.

"Poppy seed bake" labs were located in June (2), July (3), August (1), September (1) and November (1). All except one appear to have been located through the execution of drug search warrants. The remaining one being a search warrant executed to locate stolen property.

SUMMARY

The 211 clan labs dismantled by NZP in 2006 represents a 3.43% increase over 2005 and is the highest number yet dismantled since 'official' recording began in 1996. Around 40% of clan labs are detected through drug or clan lab targeted activity. The balance (60%) are located through other policing activity or reported by the public. This appears consistent with 2005 data.

A shift in clan lab distribution appears to have occurred during 2006 with only three districts, Counties Manukau, Waikato and Bay of Plenty recording percentage increases. While Waitematā recorded the highest individual number of labs (46), they also experienced the largest percentage decrease (almost 5%).

The factors behind the distribution shifts are unclear, although the close proximity to greater Auckland, and therefore the population base and the major importation point, appears to remain a factor.

Around one third of all labs dismantled by NZP are complete, though not necessarily physically active, which appears relatively consistent with previous years.

Most clan labs detected are manufacturing, or believed to be for manufacturing, methamphetamine. Phosphorous and Iodine methods remain the most popular identified manufacturing process.

Domestic residences continue to be the predominant 'scene type', reflecting New Zealand's traditional detection of relatively small-scale 'mom and pop' or 'kitchen' clan labs. A relatively high number of clan labs are found in vehicles, also reflecting the small 'portable' nature of most clan labs. However, this should be of some concern particularly to road policing where the chemicals are known to impair driver ability and create additional risk in responding to incidents and general road policing.

One clan lab was 'dumped' in the grounds of a school, during the school holidays, but while a holiday programme was running.

Another clan lab comprising a collection of chemicals was detected after the package began to leak in a courier van, affecting the driver who returned to the base where other staff also became affected. This package had been air freighted from Auckland on a domestic flight, so it was perhaps fortunate it did not leak earlier.

One in three clan labs located in a residence has children present, a very concerning factor.

One in three of all clan labs had weapons present, ranging from knives and swords to military style semi-automatics. Improvised Explosive Devices and other explosives were also located. This significantly compounds the risks associated to clan labs.

Despite the volumes of pseudoephedrine-based products seized at the border only 20 clan labs noted the presence of imported products. This compares with 77 recordings of apparently domestically sourced PSE products. A further 22 notations reported a product that may have been either imported or domestically sourced.

There remains a need to analyse the apparent "disappearance" of the large volumes of imported product and NZP are working towards establishing an appropriate framework for this.

Links between clan labs and 'other drugs' were also noted, with cannabis being the most prevalent - ahead even of methamphetamine. Magic mushrooms, LSD, MDMA, GHB, morphine sulphate, methadone, cannabis oil and resin and ketamine were also located.

Clan lab offender data indicates that there is a relatively high rate of repeat offending, and there appears to be significant offending of other types, particularly high volume crime types, by those involved with clan labs. However, further analysis is required on this aspect.

This is perhaps not surprising though given that about three quarters of offenders have established links to recognised gangs.

The "poppy seed bake" phenomenon identified in Canterbury midway through the year appears to have abated, but needs to be monitored as it appears that there is a base opiate user group continuing to attempt morphine/heroin manufacture.