

Drug rape a growing problem

by Jonathan Williams

The hidden problem of drug rapes in New Zealand has police and frontline agencies worried.

"Anecdotal evidence suggests this is a widespread crime in New Zealand," says Emma Carroll, from the Drug Rape Trust.

"It appears that everyone knows someone who has had their drink spiked."

Detective Senior Sergeant Susan Schwalger, of the Counties-Manukau police, says the issue is still an underground problem.

She says it is still very low key.

"We're getting more reported but that's because of more education and awareness."

"Rape and sexual assault in general are under-reported because of the shame surrounding them, so our figures are not representative of what is actually going on."

Many support providers believe education is the key to dealing with the problem.

The Drug Rape Trust says the issue is largely underground because of the lack of concrete evidence and research.

"The problem can't be estimated or quantified to any degree of accuracy as definitive research has not been done in New Zealand," says Carroll.

More education is needed to raise awareness of the problem and encourage people to come forward so an accurate picture can be drawn up.

Carroll says "drink spiking has become something of a cliché in modern society", which affects the legitimacy of victims' claims.

Victoria Anderson, education officer for Rape Crisis Auckland, says information on drug rape is part of the education



PHOTO: SARAH KACI

WATCH IT: Keep a close eye on your drinks.

programme they are looking to develop.

"We need to make this issue more visible," she says.

While there are no official figures, she estimates 25 to 30 per cent of their clients are victims of drug rape.

She believes sex education in

schools focuses too much on "sexual mechanics".

"Sex education in schools is a joke. It doesn't deal with real life issues and dangers."

Drug rape can happen in a number of different ways with a number of different chemicals.

Kathryn McPhillips from

Auckland Sexual Abuse Help says agencies are not trying to create an atmosphere of paranoia, but want to ensure people are educated and know how to look after themselves properly.

Carroll says the most common form of drugging someone is through alcohol.

"It is not OK for someone to take advantage of a person who is excessively drunk," she says.

"Under the new law, which explicitly mentions alcohol, this is sexual assault."

Rohypnol is one of the most common date rape drugs.

Recent efforts have been made by manufacturer Hoffman LaRoche to make the drug less dangerous by making it turn blue when it is dissolved in a drink.

However, older pills without this quality are still in worldwide circulation.

McPhillips says Rohypnol is not as readily available in New Zealand as it is overseas.

"People more commonly use tranquilisers, which come from the streets or from their own prescriptions," says McPhillips.

Gaye Hill, agency manager for South Auckland Counselling Services, says if you have a feeling something is not quite right, get help from someone and get away from the situation straight away.

McPhillips says if you feel "more drunk or more tired than you should be really quickly, then get help".

Drug rape is an under-reported crime because of the confusion that surrounds what

happened.

Hill says mixed emotions are common after a drug rape.

"With drug rape you have feelings of confusion because there is no memory of what happened, and panic, disorientation, anger and self blame that you let it happen."

Victims of drug rape are advised to come forward.

McPhillips says it is imperative that if someone feels they have been drug-raped they should report it immediately.

"One of the big problems is that the drugs go through the system very quickly, so reporting it early and taking a urine sample can determine if drugs were used," she says.

Hill says there are many agencies involved now.

"If you feel uncomfortable going to the police, call a counsellor, rape crisis or just talk to a friend for advice and support. You will be heard."

"It is not OK for someone to take advantage of a person who is excessively drunk."

Keep Safe

Keep your cell phone on you at all times.

Drink out of bottles – it is harder to get drugs through the smaller neck.

Buy your own drinks, and keep them with you at all times.

Stay with people you know really well, not just friends of friends.

Keep an eye on your friends.

Petrol 'drive-offs' double at Pukekohe station

by Tammy Buckley

Drive-offs from a Pukekohe petrol station have more than doubled in the past few months, says owner David Harrison.

Harrison puts this down to frequently rising oil prices.

"The average spender has \$20 to \$30 a week for gas and it's just not going as far," he says.

Petrol has increased from \$1.05 this time last year to \$1.43.

Sergeant John Yearbury from Pukekohe police says increases in drive-offs are sporadic and that peaks occur at different times.

He says the peaks cannot be explained.

"We just know there are dishonest people and people who will take an opportunity if presented to them."

Meanwhile, Harrison is doing his best to prevent drive-offs and track down the past culprits.

The use of sophisticated surveillance cameras to monitor

action on the forecourt and produce photos of cars involved in the drive-off is vital in tracing offenders, he says.

Despite this a number of cars have false plates or the plates have been removed which makes it impossible to track them down, says Harrison.

Staff are the other line of defence.

Harrison says you can tell the behaviour of customers who are planning to drive off and staff are made aware of how to deal with it.

Other petrol stations in the area have switched to being on prepay all the time to combat the trend.

Yearbury says he is aware of other areas, such as Papakura, that have adopted a prepay all day policy.

He expects other areas to follow suit soon.

Harrison has no comment to make on the prepay solution.

He says his staff will continue to pursue people who drive off aggressively.

Eastern cultures on show at festival

by Fiona Peat

It's lights, camera, action for the 2005 Date Palm Festival which is set to roll in Wellington and Christchurch next month.

The festival is an opportunity to see films from the "date palm region" which ranges from Morocco to Iran.

Festival director Nadra Zarifeh says the aim of the festival is to increase the awareness of Eastern cultures, the peoples and their histories.

"People felt strongly about how the area is portrayed," Zarifeh says.

"Film helps give a human perspective and reduce generalisations and stereotypes."

The films are a mix of features and documentaries from Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Iran, Iraq and the United States,



ON SHOW: *Until When*, on offer at the Date Palm Festival.

including comedies, classical themes, social issues and politics.

Many of the films have won awards at international film festivals, including the Cannes International Film Festival.

The feature film *Mama's Guest*, by new wave director Dariush Mehrjui, won the Best Film Award at the Fajr Film Festival and has been sponsored by the Iranian Embassy.

The Iranian ambassador, Kambiz Sheikh-Hassani, will speak before the film screens in Wellington.

Zarifeh says the festival is

organised by the Cultural Awareness Trust that was formed in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001.

This is the third year that the festival has been run in Wellington, and the second year in Christchurch.

Although Auckland saw the festival last year it will miss out this September because of limited resources and funding.

"It's all done on a volunteer basis and it comes down to funding in the end," says Ms Zarifeh.

Details about the films and screenings are available at www.meff.org.nz.