



6. Cocaine

Principal findings

- The stabilising of the demand for cocaine in the United States, partly as a result of the increase in the demand for heroin, may result in international cocaine trafficking organisations looking to other countries such as Australia in which to market their product.
- In 1997–98 the total weight of cocaine detections at the Customs border in Australia increased by 10.7 kilograms from 67.5 kilograms in 1996–97, continuing the increase in the amount detected since 1994–95 (less than 20 kilograms).
- Detected importations suggest that New South Wales—in particular Sydney—remains the favoured point of entry for cocaine. Queensland came to notice as the second preferred point of entry, in contrast to 1996–97, when no detections were made at the Customs border in Queensland.
- The price for a ‘cap’ of cocaine ranged from \$20 to \$80 and the price for a gram ranged from \$120 to \$500, depending on where it was purchased and which agency reported the price—the eastern States tended to offer the cheapest prices.
- There were no reports of ‘crack’ cocaine detections or arrests by law-enforcement agencies during 1997–98, but studies of drug users’ behaviour revealed several claims of crack use in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
- A disturbing trend to emerge recently has been an increase in the injection of cocaine among heroin users in Sydney. The serious safety concerns (including for police) would be compounded if this practice were to spread to other areas.

Description

Cocaine hydrochloride—also known as ‘coke’, ‘okey dokey’, ‘C’, ‘toot’, ‘snow’, ‘marching powder’, ‘nose candy’, ‘blow’, ‘Charlie’ and ‘white lady’—is a white crystalline alkaloid powder processed from the leaves of the coca plant (*Coca erythroxylon* Lam). It may also be found in paste form. ‘Crack’—also known as ‘freebase’, ‘base’ and ‘rock’—is an extract of cocaine hydrochloride and has the appearance of small crystals or rocks.

Production

The coca plant can be grown between 300 and 1800 metres above sea level where temperatures range between 20° and 30°C. High humidity and high rainfall in areas with clay soils produce the best results. The primary coca-growing areas are in South America.

Cocaine is manufactured using chemical processes to extract coca paste from the coca leaf. Hydrochloric acid is then added to the paste to form the white crystalline substance, cocaine hydrochloride. At this stage of the process the purity of the cocaine hydrochloride ranges from 70 per cent to as high as 86 percent. Crack cocaine is produced by a chemical process that involves the removal of the hydrochloride.

Methods of administration

Cocaine hydrochloride is most commonly administered by snorting directly into the nostril or dissolving it in water and injecting it. It can be taken orally (added to a liquid or sprinkled on food). It cannot be smoked because it is destroyed at high temperatures. On the other hand, crack cocaine is commonly smoked. The raw coca leaf is chewed.

Effects

Cocaine hydrochloride stimulates the central and sympathetic nervous systems by speeding up the activity of certain pathways to the brain. The user experiences a euphoric effect that reduces appetite, increases sexual arousal, heightens alertness and energy, and gives a feeling of great well-being. Smoking crack cocaine results in a quicker, more intense ‘rush’. Excessive cocaine use can cause lung or heart failure; bursting of blood vessels in the brain; fast, irregular or weak heartbeats; muscle twitching; fits; decreased libido or impotence; and weight loss. Prolonged use can result in cocaine psychosis, the symptoms of which include hearing voices, delusions, suspicion and fear of persecution.

The international situation

Overview

In 1997 potential coca leaf cultivation decreased by 13 per cent from 1996, to nearly 264 000 tonnes, enough to produce 650 tonnes of cocaine (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998b). Some coca-producing countries have gone to considerable lengths to reduce coca production through eradication and crop-replacement programs; in other countries there has been a significant increase in production. In spite of the decline in production in 1997, indicators suggest that the amount of cocaine hydrochloride available at street level is unprecedented (Interpol 1997).

Heroin abuse affects more countries, but cocaine abuse is more widespread internationally in terms of the total number of users. Statistics suggest that at least 13 million people (0.23 per cent of the global population) use cocaine on an annual basis (United Nations International Drug Control Programme 1997). The shrinkage in the North American cocaine market has been offset by growth in the European market (Interpol 1997).

Some of the major cocaine-trafficking groups have moved their attention to expanding their production of opiates—heroin has a higher profit margin—although they have not abandoned the cocaine market. In recent years some of the well-known drug-trafficking groups in Latin American countries—such as the Cali cartel, the Herrera organisation, the Tijuana organisation and the Juarez cartel—have been dismantled by combined law-enforcement activities, but many smaller groups have filled the void. These smaller groups see it as being in their interest to cooperate with each other, rather than subject themselves to the usual violent rivalry, which is ultimately counter-productive (Interpol 1997).



Plate 6.1: Coca leaf
Source: USDEA.



Plate 6.2: Coca paste
Source: USDEA.



Plate 6.3: Coca flower
Source: USDEA.



Plate 6.4: 'Crack' cocaine
Source: USDEA.

The Australian Federal Police reported that several South American countries have amended their drug-related laws and improved the operation of their judicial systems. Among the measures taken are the installation of modern equipment, changes in the way judges are appointed, increases in judges' remuneration, and better personal protection for judicial staff.

Table 6.1 shows a comparison of cocaine prices in various countries.

Table 6.1: Cocaine prices, selected countries, 1997–98

Country	(A\$) Price per gram	Price per kilogram
Argentina	34	10 000
Australia	350–800	100 000–130 000
Bolivia	n.a.	1 600
Ecuador	n.a.	5 500
India	n.a.	60 000
Lebanon	n.a.	33 300–66 600
Paraguay	34	5 800
Peru	n.a.	3 000
United States Southern California (More than 10 kilograms)	133	23 333–28 333 20 000–21 666

n.a. Not available.

Note: Foreign country prices were provided in US\$ and converted to A\$. The conversion rate was US\$1.0000 = A\$0.6 (valid at 23 September 1998).

Source: Australian Federal Police (1998).

United States

In 1996 an estimated 1.7 million Americans—or 0.8 per cent of the household population aged 12 years and over—were using cocaine. The 1995 estimate was 1.5 million, but the 1985 estimate was 5.7 million (ABCI 1997). Maxwell states, 'In the last two to three years, as the demand for cocaine in the US has begun to level off, the Colombians have begun growing poppies and producing heroin which is very pure' (1997, p. 20).

In 1997 the trend for importation of cocaine into the United States from Colombia continued, despite the efforts of Colombian police and military counter-drug units. Mexican trafficking groups have taken over from the traditional Colombian distributors: this occurred after the Colombians began paying the Mexican smugglers in cocaine, which dramatically increased the Mexicans' profits and led them to set up their own distribution network to dispose of the cocaine.

Historically, 60 per cent of the cocaine leaving South America en route to the United States has been transhipped via Texas, California, New Mexico and Arizona (Chalk 1998). Because the border between Mexico and the United States has become a major transit point for a large number of American corporations, cross-border movements of both people and vehicles have increased dramatically. The corporations establish themselves in Mexico, where labour is cheap, and ship their manufactured goods to the United States. In 1996 and 1997, 3.5 million trucks and rail cars crossed into the United States from Mexico at various commercial ports. In 1997 approximately 30 per cent of these vehicles were inspected for narcotics, compared with only 25 per cent in 1996.

The Australian Federal Police reported that, despite the increase in the number of inspections, US Customs Service inspectors seized just over 1000 kilograms of cocaine in 1997, compared with nearly 7000 kilograms in 1996, a drop of about 85 per cent. Nationally, cocaine seized by the US Customs Service dropped by 15 per cent in 1997, from 85 250 kilograms in 1996 to 72 336 kilograms. Cooperation between Mexican and US authorities has increased, but it has been speculated that the Colombian cocaine traffickers are moving away from using the traditional Mexican border route because of the tougher law-enforcement strategies and greedy Mexican partners.

Primarily because of its geographical characteristics and limited law-enforcement capabilities the Caribbean has become increasingly attractive as a transshipment point, not only for the United States but also for Europe and Oceania. For instance, in 1997 the Bahamas, which is only 60-odd kilometres from Florida, recorded its highest cocaine seizures since 1992. It has been estimated that about 3.5 tonnes of cocaine passed through the Bahamas each month in 1997 (INCB 1998).

Plate 6.5: Cocaine hydrochloride
Source: USDEA.

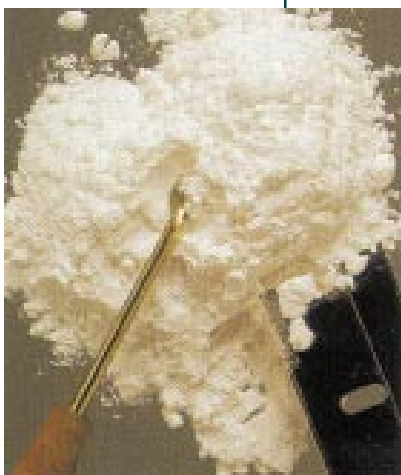


Table 6.2: Cocaine seizures detected in the United States that were destined for Australia, 1997–98

Origin	Date and amount	Intended destination	Method of concealment
Los Angeles	1 July 1997 328 grams	Sydney	Inside bicycle in cargo
Hawaii	22 September 1997 74.3 kilograms	Sydney	Body pack
Los Angeles	14 February 1997 8 kilograms	Melbourne	Body pack two female couriers
Los Angeles	5 April 1998 5.1 kilograms	Cairns	Body pack

Source: Australian Federal Police (1998).

Colombian cocaine and heroin traffickers are believed to be increasingly using the Caribbean islands as transshipment points. US federal drug officials seized over 7 tonnes of cocaine during November and December 1997. Much of this was hidden aboard cargo ships from Venezuela. Authorities believe that the Colombians are opening up the old smuggling routes via Florida (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998b).

According to the Australian Federal Police, information suggests that Colombian traffickers are using the east coast of Canada (Halifax) to import cocaine and heroin into Canada. The drugs are then moved to New York, crossing the Canada – United States border. This route is believed to be less risky than the Mexican border route or other direct routes into the United States. There have been cases reported in Canada of Colombian traffickers exchanging cocaine for South East Asian heroin. Some sources suggest that both Colombian and South East Asian crime groups are targeting Canada for the storage of cocaine and heroin because of the perceived lower risk of lengthy incarceration should they be detected. It is widely reported that the use of crack cocaine is decreasing in the United States.

Mexico

Although Mexico is not regarded as a source country, it has played a major role in the distribution of cocaine to the United States and beyond. During the 1990s Colombian and Mexican trafficking groups established a new arrangement whereby the Mexicans received a percentage of cocaine (instead of cash) for each shipment transported. This allowed the Mexicans to become involved in wholesale distribution in the United States through their own distribution networks. Ethnic cohesion makes penetration of the Mexican and Colombian groups more difficult; it also gives the Colombians leverage over the family members of drug traffickers in Mexico because they rely on the Colombians for their livelihood (INCB 1998).

The Australian Federal Police reported that in 1997 the leader of one of the biggest Mexican drug rings, the Juarez cartel, died while receiving plastic surgery to disguise his appearance. He was indicted in Dallas and Miami for cocaine trafficking and had been a fugitive for eight years. This has reportedly both weakened the cartel and triggered a war of succession in it.

Venezuela

Venezuelan authorities seized 15 501 kilograms of cocaine in 1997, compared with 6051 kilograms in 1996. Venezuela is used as a transshipment point for cocaine.

In July 1997 Venezuelan authorities made the largest seizure of cocaine (5399 kilograms) ever recorded for that country. The cocaine was detected in a vessel in a Venezuelan port. Several Peruvian nationals and two Colombian nationals were arrested.

Brazil

Limited amounts of coca and cocaine are produced in Brazil and no firm estimates of production are available (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998b). The Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs reported, however, that Brazilian authorities claim they did not identify any commercial coca or opium cultivation in 1997 and, for the fourth consecutive year, did not detect any cocaine-processing laboratories (1998, p. 7 of 16).

In spite of this, Brazil continues to be a major transit country for illicit drugs shipped to the United States and Europe (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998a).

Europe

Since the late 1980s Europe has traditionally had a heroin market: it has now experienced an increased demand for cocaine. In 1996, 31 301 kilograms were seized; this compares with 17 109 kilograms in 1991. Almost 70 per cent of the cocaine seized in 1996 was seized in Spain (13 700 kilograms) and the Netherlands (8000 kilograms). Over 1000 kilograms was seized in each of Italy, France, Germany and the United Kingdom and there was an increase in the number of countries that reported seizures (INCB 1998). No 1997 data are available for Europe.

...Since the late 1980s Europe has traditionally had a heroin market: it has now experienced an increased demand for cocaine. In 1996, 31 301 kilograms were seized; this compares with 17 109 kilograms in 1991. Almost 70 per cent of the cocaine seized in 1996 was seized in Spain (13 700 kilograms) and the Netherlands (8000 kilograms)...

...The Australian Federal Police reported that there are seizures of cocaine in Indonesia but that they are few. It has information to suggest that in late 1997 there was a 90-kilogram shipment of cocaine into Bali, some of which is thought to have been destined for Australia or New Zealand, or both...

Plate 6.6: Coca processing
Source: Victoria Forensic Science Centre.



Spain appears to be a central point for the transshipment of cocaine into Europe. Early in 1997 Spanish authorities dismantled two cocaine laboratories. In August 1997 they dismantled a third laboratory, which resulted in the arrest of 12 Spanish and Bolivian nationals and the seizure of 13 kilograms of cocaine and numerous chemicals and solvents. In September 1997 Spanish authorities seized another 4728 kilograms, discovered at a remote beach near Tupia De Casariego packed in 166 separate bundles (INCB 1998).

The Australian Federal Police reported that in Greece 1.6 kilograms of cocaine was seized in 1997; this compares with 4 kilograms in 1996 and 9 kilograms in the five months to 31 May 1998. Most of the cocaine is reported to be entering Greece via Albania.

The former Soviet Union

The Australian Federal Police reported that cocaine-seizure figures are not available for Russia at present. In spite of this, General Serrano of the Colombian National Police warned all nations at the 1998 International Drug Conference in Costa Rica that the Russian gangs were the newest threat in his 'war against cocaine smuggling'. It is believed that large volumes of cocaine are now available in countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. Cocaine is reported to sell there for up to A\$750 a gram, which is more than three times the average cost in the United States.

The Middle East

Cocaine is not widely used in the Middle East. According to the Australian Federal Police, in 1997 Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Jordan and Saudi Arabia reported seizures of cocaine. The main concern is Lebanon, where cocaine appears to be popular. Most of the cocaine available in that country is believed to have originated in South America, having been imported by people of Lebanese origin now living in South America. During 1997 Middle East cocaine seizures remained insignificant: this is thought to be because of a change in traffickers' tactics rather than decreased use or importation of cocaine.

Africa

African countries continue to be used for transshipping cocaine originating in Brazil and destined for Europe. Manufacture of crack from South American cocaine in clandestine laboratories has been reported in Senegal and South Africa. The incidence of cocaine use has increased and crack has become widely available in more countries in western Africa (INCB 1998).

Because of its size, location and political instability, Nigeria has become Africa's most prominent transshipment point for cocaine and heroin. Nigerian traffickers have shown much ingenuity in continuing to dominate the acquisition and transport of cocaine from source countries to Africa. Recent law-enforcement efforts have led them to become extremely adept at employing nationals of the target countries as couriers (Interpol 1997).

The Australian Federal Police reported that Nigerian drug-trafficking rings often use postal and courier services for smuggling cocaine to just about every other country in Africa. The amount of cocaine seized would suggest that the drug is not intended just for Africa but is probably forwarded to Europe for further distribution. The AFP also noted that almost every African country now reports cocaine seizures, with Ghana and South Africa serving as important junctions for the drug's transit.

South East Asia

The Australian Federal Police reported that there are seizures of cocaine in Indonesia but that they are few. It has information to suggest that in late 1997 there was a 90-kilogram shipment of cocaine into Bali, some of which is thought to have been destined for Australia or New Zealand, or both. There is no evidence that any of the shipment has been seized. Indonesian authorities report that cocaine use does not appear to pose any real problem among Indonesian nationals in South East Asia.

The Australian Federal Police also reported that there have been several seizures of South American cocaine in Thailand. Thai authorities are of the view that the syndicates involved are organising direct exchanges of narcotics, rather than using money. On several occasions the cocaine has been in the possession of couriers going through Bangkok en route to Europe. Cocaine is also often transhipped via the postal system. Further, there are reports that Thailand is becoming the 'K-Mart' of the drug world: dealers appear able to supply any quantity of any drug to anywhere in the world.

According to the Australian Federal Police, the Philippines is still considered a transshipment point for cocaine. Some of the larger international commercial courier services are located there. The AFP noted that there are indications that drug traffickers are increasing their reliance on these courier services as a means of transshipping cocaine throughout Asia. In the Philippines, cocaine seizures amount to between 1 and 2 kilograms a year: the drug's high cost is an inhibiting factor in local use.

Oceania

The Australian Customs Service suggests that New Zealand is still being used as a transshipment point for cocaine destined for Australia and that this may be because New Zealand is a stopover point for many airlines travelling from the Americas.

According to Customs, during the reporting period there were several importations of cocaine by couriers organised by a Tongan based in Hawaii. The syndicate involved is believed responsible for organising the importation of 14 kilograms of cocaine during 1996 and 1997. United States authorities arrested the Hawaii-based syndicate leader and eight others in January 1998. The group had links with the United States, Hawaii, New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Guam and Australia. A joint Customs – AFP – New South Wales Crime Commission – New South Wales Police operation led to the arrest of the Australian recipients of the cocaine.

Source countries

At present coca is cultivated extensively in only three countries: Peru, Bolivia and Colombia. Governments in the three countries have agreed in principle to reducing coca cultivation, but only Colombia permits aerial eradication. Bolivia allows only manual eradication because some coca is reserved for traditional uses such as chewing: this makes eradication a slow and at times dangerous process for the eradication staff. Peru has introduced a crop-control strategy combining interdiction, enforcement and incentives for alternative enterprises: this has proved successful, and further cooperation, determination, political will and patience should continue to produce results.

The Australian Federal Police reported that Colombian drug syndicates are pursuing a major investment in heroin production as well as continuing to manufacture and distribute cocaine. It is thought that the Colombian syndicates are promoting dual use of heroin and cocaine to users.

Peru

The Australian Federal Police reported that because of the continued anti-drug effort in South America there has been considerable progress in crop reduction, most notably in Peru. The combined efforts of US, Peruvian and Colombian authorities in the last three years have led to severe restrictions on the amount of Peruvian cocaine base destined for Colombia. This has deprived the Colombian cocaine trade of critical base material and created an almost non-existent market for Peruvian coca leaf, thus driving the price of coca leaf in Peru to below the break-even level. Peruvian growers have therefore taken advantage of the alternative development incentives: net coca leaf cultivation in 1997 was estimated at 68 800 hectares compared with 129 100 hectares in 1992.

Net cultivation in Peru fell 27 per cent (by nearly 26 000 hectares) in 1997 and, overall, cultivation has dropped some 40 per cent since 1995. Of the three varieties of coca that are cultivated for coca production, the variety grown in Peru has the highest leaf yield (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998b).

Bolivia

The Australian Federal Police reported that the Bolivian Government's program of voluntary and involuntary eradication, enhanced by US government assistance and alternative development incentives, has reduced the net cultivation of coca by a little over 5 per cent. The 1997 crop was Bolivia's smallest in 10 years, and in that year over 10 tonnes of cocaine base and cocaine hydrochloride were seized by Bolivian authorities.

Bolivia also grows the variety of coca with the highest leaf yield. The modest reduction of 2300 hectares for two years in a row was a direct result of government crop-eradication programs targeting mature crops¹ during 1996 and 1997 (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998b).

Colombia

In Colombia successful coca-control operations and reduced supplies from Peru have caused traffickers to plant new coca plantations outside the traditional growing areas. Cultivation has begun in the provinces of Caqueta and Putumayo, where a strong guerrilla presence makes eradication more difficult. The traffickers have also brought in better anti-aircraft weaponry, severely limiting the authorities' ability to conduct aerial eradication and surveillance operations.

Despite the difficulties, though, crop-spraying operations destroyed 19 000 hectares of coca in 1997. But, with net cultivation of 79 500 hectares at the end of 1997, Colombia has the world's largest area of coca under cultivation. In terms of actual leaf production, however, Colombia still ranks behind Peru and Bolivia, most probably because of the low-yield variety cultivated and the more alkaline soils. Other varieties of coca are grown in Colombia and efforts are under way to study them (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998b).



Map 6.1: Coca growing areas: South America
Source: Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (1998b).

Plate 6.7: Coca leaf cultivation Peru
Source: USDEA.



...New South Wales—in particular Sydney—remains the favoured point of entry for cocaine detected at the Customs border, with 78 per cent of the total weight of cocaine detected in Australia 1997–98...

Table 6.3: Net coca cultivation, potential leaf production and potential cocaine: Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, 1993 to 1997

Country	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Net cultivation (hectares)					
Peru	108 800	108 600	115 300	94 400	68 800
Bolivia	47 200	48 100	48 600	48 100	45 800
Colombia	39 700	45 000	50 900	67 200	79 500
Total	195 700	201 700	214 800	209 700	194 100
Potential leaf production (metric tons [tonnes])					
Peru	157 600	165 400	183 600	174 700	130 200
Bolivia	84 400	89 800	85 000	75 100	70 100
Colombia	31 700	36 000	40 800	53 800	63 600
Total	273 700	291 200	309 400	303 600	263 900
Potential cocaine (metric tons [tonnes])					
Peru	410	435	460	435	325
Bolivia	240	255	240	215	200
Colombia	65	70	80	110	125
Total	715	760	780	760	650

Source: Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (1998).

The Australian Federal Police reported that, in 1997, 41 tonnes of cocaine product—nearly double the 1996 figure—was seized in Colombia. A joint Peruvian–Colombian operation led to the arrest of Waldo Simeon Vargas Arias ('El Ministro') in Bogota. He is believed to have been responsible for supplying over half the cocaine base refined by the Colombian cartels. He also appears to have been a major figure in the Colombian heroin trade.

Table 6.3 shows net coca cultivation, potential leaf production and potential cocaine for Peru, Bolivia and Colombia from 1993 to 1997.

The Australian situation

Importation

Figure 6.1 shows cocaine detections at the Customs border, by weight and number, since 1989–90. The high in 1990–91 coincides with the peak production period for coca worldwide. Cocaine detections by weight have progressively increased since 1993–94; detections by number have increased since 1994–95.

The Australian Customs Service reported 52 cocaine detections, weighing a total of 78.2 kilograms, in 1997–98. This was an increase of 10.7 kilograms on the total weight of detections in 1996–97.

As Figure 6.2 shows, New South Wales—in particular Sydney—remains the favoured point of entry for cocaine detected at the Customs border, with 78 per cent of the total weight of cocaine detected in Australia 1997–98. Queensland came to notice as the second preferred point of entry for detected cocaine; this is in direct contrast with the previous reporting period, when no detections were made at the border in that State. Although the number of detections in Queensland (six) when compared with New South Wales (39) was very small, all of them were in excess of 1 kilogram (indicating a traffickable quantity and not for personal use); two were in excess of 2.5 kilograms. The largest seizure, of 4.5 kilograms, was made at Cairns International Airport; all the other detections were made at Brisbane International Airport. Victoria recorded a slight increase in the weight of detected cocaine, while Western Australia recorded a decrease. No other jurisdiction recorded detections of cocaine at the Customs border.

Customs reported that people detected importing cocaine are quite often South American or US nationals. The trend to use Australian couriers continues, however.

Customs data for 1997–98 identify the following countries as embarkation points for the transhipment of cocaine into Australia (the number of times they were used is in parentheses):

- Argentina (ten) • United States (nine) • Brazil (five) • Fiji (five) • Colombia (three) • Peru (two)
- Netherlands (two) • United Kingdom (two) • Canada (two) • Tonga (two) • Ecuador (two) • Hong Kong (one)
- Chile (one) • Spain (one) • Germany (one) • Thailand (one) • Uruguay (one).

In two cases no embarkation point was given.

Of the embarkation points identified as transshipment points for the importation of cocaine into Australia in 1997–98, 42.3 per cent were South American countries and 17.3 per cent were in the United States. It is possible that the stabilising of the demand for cocaine in the United States, may have resulted in international cocaine-trafficking organisations looking to other countries—and in particular Australia—to market their product.

The Australian Federal Police reported that various places are used as transshipment points for cocaine destined for Australia; of note during 1997–98 were Pacific Island countries such as Tonga and Fiji.

An analysis of Customs data revealed that various routes were used for the importation of cocaine into Australia. Of particular note during 1997–98 was New Zealand, followed by Brazil, Singapore, London, Frankfurt, Bangkok, Canada and South Africa.

The National Crime Authority reported an example of this. Three Australian citizens traveled from Melbourne via Sydney to Vancouver then to Trinidad, where they collected a quantity of cocaine. Subsequently arrested at Toronto Airport in Canada on the return journey to Melbourne, they had 6 kilograms of cocaine secreted in their luggage. It appears they were attempting to disguise their visit to Trinidad, a recognised transshipment point, by travelling via Canada.

Coca leaf importation

Customs made five separate detections of coca leaf during 1997–98:

- 105 grams detected in passenger baggage at Melbourne International Airport in January 1998;
- seven cartons detected in April 1998 in Melbourne, having been sent via parcel post from Bolivia;
- two detections, both in passenger baggage at Sydney Kingsford Smith International Airport and both originating in Peru—one seizure of 1 gram in September 1997 and the other, coming via New Zealand, of 103 grams in January 1998;
- 223.3 grams detected in passenger baggage at Brisbane International Airport and originating in Peru.

It is difficult to determine the motivation behind the importation of coca leaf. It is likely that the leaves are imported for personal consumption, since traditionally people from South American countries chew the leaves. Further research would be needed if coca leaf imports were to increase significantly.

Methods of importation and concealment

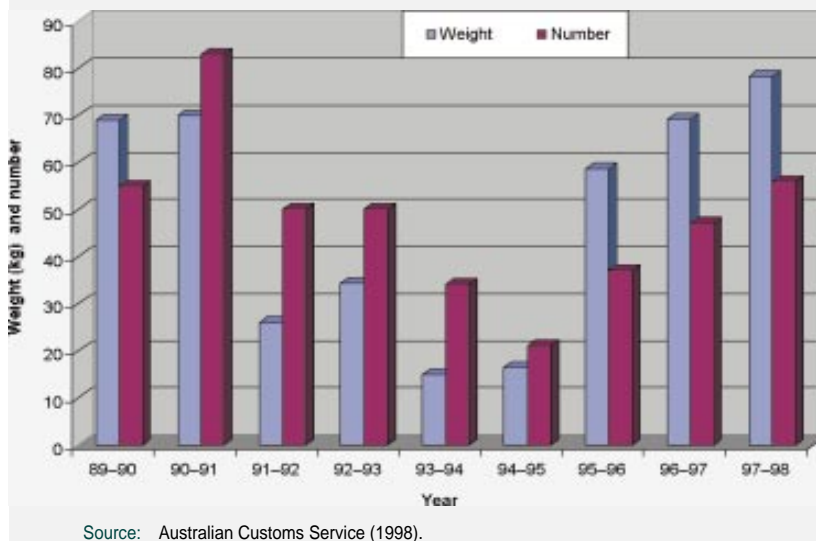
Figure 6.3 shows the main cocaine importation methods detected, as a proportion of total seizure weight, at the Customs border in 1997–98. As in the past, very little cocaine was seized from ships—268 grams in 1997–98.

Drug importers have begun using more than one courier on the same flight, each courier carrying a small amount of cocaine. The reason for this is thought to be to reduce the amount of cocaine seized in any one interdiction and to increase the odds of couriers successfully getting through the Customs border.

The use of the post and courier systems for cocaine importation is also reflected in the overseas experience, which shows that several groups, among them Nigerian trafficking organisations, favour this method (Interpol 1997).

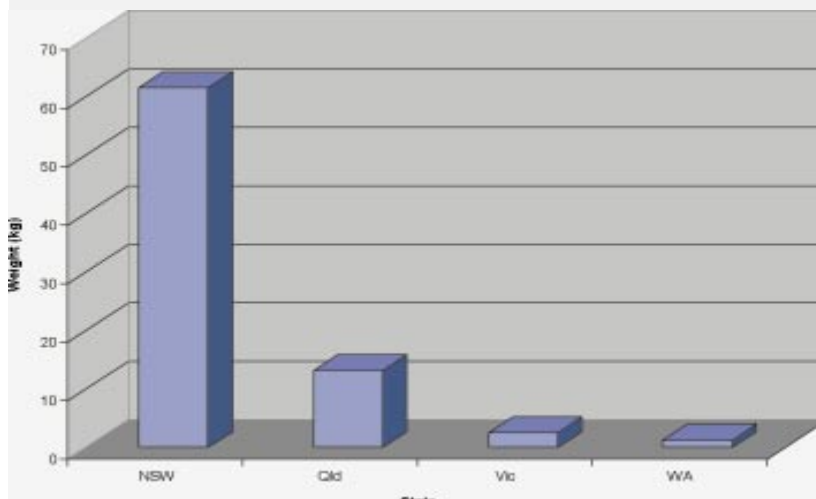
The small amount of cocaine being seized from ships (actually hidden on vessels, inside cargo and in containers) in Australia is disconcerting: experience overseas reveals that this method is used extensively by the Colombian drug-trafficking organisations. Customs reported that well over 1 million containers enter Australian ports each year. All sea cargo (container and non-container cargo) is reported to Customs and assessed for risk.

Figure 6.1: Cocaine detections at the Customs border, by weight and number, 1989–90 to 1997–98



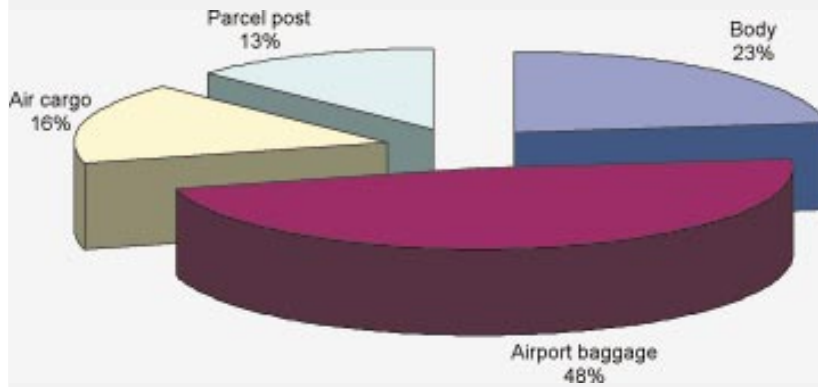
Source: Australian Customs Service (1998).

Figure 6.2: Cocaine: detections at the Customs border, by weight and State, 1997–98



Source: Australian Customs Service (1998).

Figure 6.3: Cocaine importation methods detected by Customs, by percentage of total weight, 1997–98



Note: Ship search detections were insignificant and amounted to less than 0.4%.

Source: Australian Customs Service (1998).

...No figures are available for New South Wales. Figure 6.4 shows the average quarterly purity levels for all cocaine seizures analysed Australia-wide between January 1995 and July 1998. Although there has been a slight decrease in overall purity, the level fluctuates from quarter to quarter...

Market indicators

Prices

During 1997–98 the price for a gram of cocaine remained stable in South Australia (\$200 to \$500) and Victoria (\$200 to \$500). No prices were reported for Western Australia. In April–June 1998 in Queensland the price appears to have dropped: it was reported to be as low as \$120 a gram, down from \$200 to \$250 in the preceding nine months. In New South Wales the latest prices show a slight decline: from \$200 to \$180 a gram. In 1996–97 the average price for cocaine in Queensland and New South Wales was around \$200 a gram.

‘Caps’ (a cap weighs approximately 0.2 grams) of cocaine could be purchased for as little as \$20 to \$50 in April–June 1998 in New South Wales—this is a reduction in price since 1996–97, when the price for a ‘cap’ was \$40 to \$80. In South Australia the price of a ‘cap’ of cocaine ranged between \$40 and \$80.

Under the Illicit Drug Reporting System several surveys of injecting drug users and informants were carried out in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne² between April and September 1997 (Hando et al. 1998). The price for a ‘cap’ of cocaine in Sydney and Adelaide was \$80 and \$50 respectively. No price was recorded for Melbourne. In the same period the price for a ‘cap’ of heroin in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, was \$30, \$40 and \$50 respectively.

Hando et al. further reported that the price for a gram of cocaine was \$200 in Sydney, \$250 in Adelaide and \$300 in Melbourne. The price for a gram of heroin was \$400 in Sydney and Adelaide and \$450 in Melbourne.

This would suggest that prices for ‘caps’ of heroin and cocaine are now comparable, although it would appear that the gram price for cocaine is considerably less than that for a gram of heroin. The survey findings are supported by the Bureau’s data (see Chapter 13). No real conclusion can be drawn from this, other than that perhaps heroin is ‘cut’ or diluted more often down the distribution chain than cocaine is, so more street deals (‘caps’) of heroin can be produced from a gram.

Purity

During 1997–98 the purity of cocaine seized in Australia ranged from 0.1 per cent to 91 per cent. In South Australia purity remained relatively stable; in Queensland it fluctuated. In Victoria purity remained stable for all but the first quarter of 1998, when it dropped. In Western Australia purity remained stable over the year.

The 1997–98 average purity levels for Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia were 54 per cent, 35 per cent, 29 per cent and 44 per cent respectively. No figures are available for New South Wales. Figure 6.4 shows the average quarterly purity levels for all cocaine seizures analysed Australia-wide between January 1995 and July 1998. Although there has been a slight decrease in overall purity, the level fluctuates from quarter to quarter.

Availability

Law-enforcement agencies report that cocaine remains available in most of the eastern States and in Western Australia. The Australian Federal Police reported that on the Gold Coast of Queensland and in northern New South Wales use of cocaine increased during 1997–98: anecdotal information suggests that drug dealers in these areas are offering ‘two for the price of one’ deals to encourage cocaine use.

The Queensland Police Service reported that cocaine and heroin seizures have on many occasions been directly linked to Cabramatta in Sydney. It also reported that there appears to be an increase in the availability of cocaine in the Cairns – Port Douglas area and that some intelligence suggests cocaine use is prevalent among the homosexual community in this area. Information from needle and syringe exchanges in Queensland also confirms an increase in cocaine use during the latter part of the 1997–98.

The National Crime Authority reported charging several people with conspiracy to import cocaine into Australia. In one instance a small criminal network conspired to import a large amount of cocaine in a wine consignment from Chile; the principal offenders visited Chile on several occasions to arrange the shipment. Another incident involved a Greek–Australian conspiring to import a large quantity of cocaine from Brazil; the cocaine was to be dropped at sea off the Australian Coast. Such incidents make it clear that traffickers are prepared to use the shipping environment to import cocaine into this country.

The National Crime Authority further reported that although using wine bottles to conceal cocaine in solution is not new it is apparently becoming more popular. Detection is difficult and the importers are willing to pay a chemist to conduct the complex extraction process.

New South Wales law-enforcement agencies and the Kirketon Road Centre in Sydney's Kings Cross report that some people from the Indigenous community in Redfern, Sydney, are increasingly using cocaine. This is also true for other non-Indigenous people in inner-city Sydney. Hando et al. (1998) state that cocaine was readily available in Sydney and the supply had remained stable since 1996. In Adelaide availability was stable to fluctuating and in Melbourne it was stable but often difficult to obtain. More recent studies of IDU's found that while cocaine was easily available in Sydney, it was difficult to obtain in Melbourne and Adelaide (McKetin et al. 1998).

There were no reports of 'crack' cocaine being seized by law-enforcement agencies during 1997-98. Research data do, however, indicate that cocaine users have experimented with crack. As noted, under the Illicit Drug Reporting System, surveys were carried out in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. The results show that, in the previous six months (survey carried out between April and September 1997), 4 per cent of injecting cocaine users in Sydney reported using crack, 1 per cent of users did in Melbourne, and 4 per cent of users did in Adelaide (Hando et al. 1998).

Arrests

Table 6.4 shows Australia-wide arrests for cocaine-related offences from 1995-96 to 1997-98. Although there was no increase in the total number of arrests between 1996-97 and 1997-98, there is a difference in the spread of these arrests. In particular, arrests in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland increased significantly.

Western Australia Police reported that cocaine is readily available in that State: the increase in arrests tends to support this. South Australia's Drug Squad reported an increase in the number of cocaine-related implements found during searches, although this did not necessarily result in arrests for cocaine possession. No arrests were reported for crack cocaine during 1997-98.

Table 6.5 shows the number of cocaine arrests per 100 000 population in 1997-98. New South Wales has the highest number: this is consistent with reports of the cocaine problems associated in particular within the inner-city area of Sydney. When compared with arrests per 100 00 population for heroin (52.9), cocaine remains insignificant.

In 1997-98 about 79 per cent of those arrested were males, and males aged between 15 and 30 years accounted for 55 per cent of all males arrested. Females aged between 15 and 25 years accounted for about 53 per cent of all females arrested.

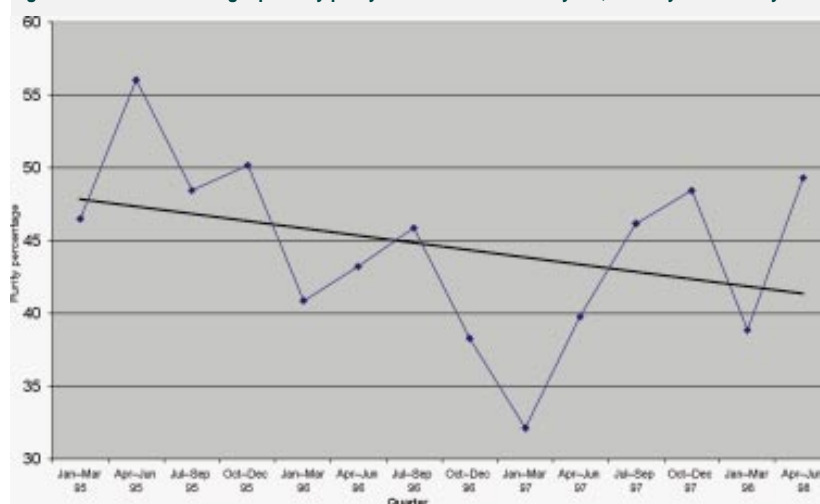
Table 6.4: Cocaine Australia-wide arrests, 1995-96 to 1997-98

State/Territory	Number of arrests		
	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
New South Wales	269	395	325
Victoria	36	29	32
Western Australia	2	12	23
Queensland	19	15	65
South Australia	4	8	15
Tasmania	0	0	0
Northern Territory	0	1	0
Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0
Total	330	460	460

Note: The data include AFP arrests, which cover both domestic and border arrests.

Source: ABCI (1998).

Figure 6.4: Cocaine: Average quarterly purity level for seizures analysed, January 1995 to July 1998



Notes: New South Wales data to July 1997; Australian Capital Territory data from January 1998; South Australian data from July 1997; AFP New South Wales data from July 1997.

Source: ABCI (1998).

...During the reporting period many law-enforcement agencies and health professionals reported that polydrug use had increased; this would be primarily attributable to the habitual drug user group, given that recreational users rarely come to the attention of law enforcement...

Table 6.5: Cocaine arrests per 100 000 population, by State, 1997-98

State	Number of arrests
New South Wales	5.15
Victoria	0.69
Queensland	1.89
Western Australia	1.26
South Australia	1.01

Notes: Based on December 1997 population figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. There were no arrests in Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

Source: ABCI (1998).

Figures 6.5 and 6.6 show the age distribution of male and female consumers and providers arrested for cocaine offences during 1997-98. In the case of consumers, the peak male user group is aged 15-19 years; females peak in the 15-24 age groups. In the case of providers, the peak frequency for females occurs in the 15-19 age group, whereas for male providers it occurs in the 20-24 age group. For both consumers and providers, it is interesting to note that males continue to be arrested well into their 40s while there is a direct negative correlation between the female age and arrest frequency: there are very few arrests of females over the age of 35 years.

There were 445 seizures of cocaine, weighing a total of 103.2 kilograms, in Australia in 1997-98; this compares with 455 seizures, weighing a total of 81.3 kilograms, in 1996-97. Of the total weight for 1997-98, the Australian Federal Police seized (post-border seizures only) 14 per cent (14.4 kilograms), Customs (detections) 75.7 per cent, and all other State and Territory police services combined 10.3 per cent (10.6 kilograms).

As noted in Chapter 3 the Australian Federal Police and Customs record the same information, but the AFP also records its domestic seizures (that is, post-border seizures). When seizure data are compiled for the States and Territories the AFP seizures are added to these totals: this includes border detections because AFP domestic and border detections cannot be separated (see Chapter 13 for State and Territory weights).

Patterns of use

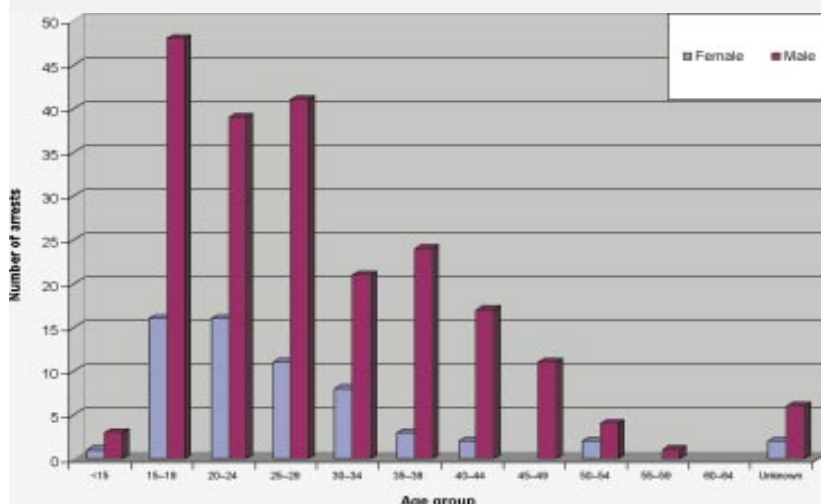
The *Australian Illicit Drug Report 1996-97* stated, 'Australian cocaine users seem to fall into two socially distinct groups: recreational users (mainly upper-middle class professionals who use intra-nasally) and habitual drug abusers (who often use a variety of illicit drugs and favour injecting)' (ABCI 1997, p. 88). This holds good for cocaine users in 1997-98. The recreational group is a relatively 'hidden' group, possibly because the users come from higher socio-economic backgrounds and their cocaine use is virtually undetectable; that is, they tend not to come to the attention of police and if addiction problems occur they can afford private treatment.

During the reporting period many law-enforcement agencies and health professionals reported that polydrug use had increased; this would be primarily attributable to the habitual drug user group, given that recreational users rarely come to the attention of law enforcement. Of particular concern is the reported injecting of cocaine by heroin users. As discussed in Chapter 3, between June and December 1996 the Kerketon Road Centre in Kings Cross conducted what was called the 'Okey Doke' project, a survey of 58 cocaine-injecting drug users in Kings Cross. The following emerged.

- Twenty-seven of the respondents reported that heroin was their drug of preference.
- Twenty-three respondents said that heroin was the drug they actually used most often.
- All respondents were polydrug users and on average had used five different drugs in the six months preceding the study.
- Twenty-eight respondents reported cocaine binges lasting one to two days; eight of them reported binges lasting longer than a week.
- Fifty respondents had been in custody at some time, with an average of nine episodes of incarceration.

Although this study was specific to the Kings Cross area and was conducted in 1996, anecdotal information from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland suggests that there is a definite trend to

Figure 6.5: Cocaine consumer arrests, by gender and age group, 1997-98



Source: ABCI (1998).

polydrug use, especially among heroin users (who also identify as cocaine users). Hando et al. report the following in relation to several recent studies of injecting drug users (IDUs) and key informants in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide:

Polydrug use was common in all cities. The mean number of drug classes used in the past 6 months was 6 for both Adelaide and Melbourne, and 7 for Sydney. Furthermore, the injection of a variety of drug classes was also common, with IDUs from all cities injecting a mean of 2 different classes within the past 6 months. (1998, p. 6)

However, similar studies conducted in 1997–98 found that there was a sharp increase in cocaine use in Sydney, characterised by injection of cocaine among heroin IDUs. This trend was not found in Adelaide or Melbourne (McKetin et al. 1998).

In a recently published report by the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria (1998), 31 000 students aged 12 to 17 years were surveyed. The survey results showed that 4 per cent of secondary students had ever used cocaine. Two per cent of those students reported using the substance in the last year and 1 per cent had used it in the month preceding the survey (which was conducted in 1996).

Police investigations and research studies tend to focus on the community of regular drug users. The results reflect developments among these groups, which use drugs more than the general population. So far there is little evidence to show that cocaine use has increased among the general population. At the time of writing, the results of the National Drug Strategy Household Survey for 1998 were not known.

Trafficking networks

Trafficking networks in Australia appear to vary from State to State. New South Wales sources, including police and health workers, report that since the Royal Commission and the arrest of some Lebanese drug traffickers, trafficking networks have been taken over by Pacific Islanders (predominantly Samoans and Tongans). The Islanders were formerly the ‘enforcers’ for the Lebanese traffickers but are now trafficking cocaine themselves. Interviews with law-enforcement officers and health professionals produced anecdotal evidence that the Lebanese are still supplying bulk cocaine to the Islanders, although the Islanders do not appear to use cocaine. Other anecdotal evidence suggests that Asian groups are trafficking in cocaine in the Cabramatta area.

Both New South Wales and Victoria Police reported that criminals of Romanian extraction now appear to be involved in the cocaine market, in addition to the heroin market. Some South Americans resident in Australia also seem to feature in both importation and distribution of cocaine in Australia. The National Crime Authority reported that a particular syndicate was noted for its use of some South American females residing in Australia to import cocaine; these people were used because they know the cocaine trade in South America well and are fluent in South American languages. They also have relatives in the source countries who can assist in moving the cocaine to Australia. The New South Wales Crime Commission reported that Italian criminals may also be linked to importation of the drug, and it is known that a few of these people have links with organised crime. Anglo-Saxon (US and Australian) criminals were also mixing with people of Colombian extraction to sell and distribute cocaine in New South Wales (ABCI 1997).

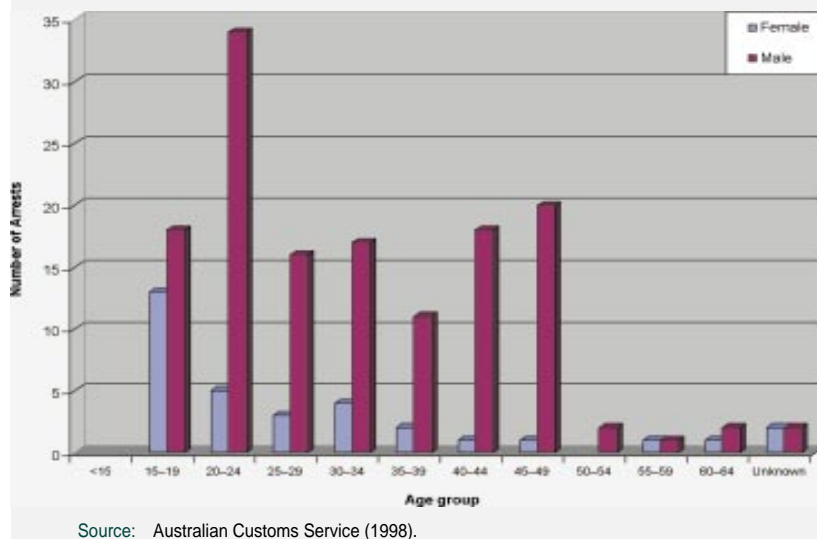
The Kirketon Road Centre reported that street dealers tend to secrete their cocaine supplies in public areas that are easily accessible, keeping just a few ‘caps’ on their person at any time. In this way they are able to dispose of the small amount they are carrying (often by swallowing it) so as to avoid detection by law enforcement.

Social and law-enforcement concerns

Law-enforcement and health agency evidence gathered during 1997–98 suggests that cocaine is increasingly available in Queensland (the Gold Coast and in and around Cairns), New South Wales (inner-city and south-west Sydney and the north of the State), and in Western Australia (Perth). In South Australia (Adelaide) and Victoria (Melbourne). Illicit Drug Reporting System information suggests that cocaine is available but more difficult to obtain (the surveys were carried out between April and September 1997). As noted, reporting by law-enforcement agencies, research and health agencies is usually centred on injecting drug users, so it is not possible to determine the availability and use of cocaine among the general population, including recreational users.

The problem for law-enforcement agencies is that the recreational user group remains relatively ‘hidden’. Anecdotal information, although not conclusive and not necessarily reliable, can assist in showing that this

Figure 6.6: Cocaine provider arrests, by gender and age group, 1997–98



...The problem for law-enforcement agencies is that the recreational user group remains relatively ‘hidden’. Anecdotal information, although not conclusive and not necessarily reliable, can assist in showing that this group is obtaining and using cocaine...

...The K2 Needle Exchange, run by the Kirketon Road Centre, reported that the typical cocaine injector comes to the Exchange in a frantic, agitated state, often demanding fast service and paying little or no heed to anyone else or any rules of exchange...

group is obtaining and using cocaine. For example, an article entitled 'The Cocaine Threat', in Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* on 8 December 1997, noted the prevalence of cocaine among Sydney's 'chic set'. Cocaine is said to be back in favour with this set and has been used more as incomes have increased: '... I went to one dinner party with 24 guests and next to everyone's setting there was a gram of coke ...' (p. 6) and '... [cocaine] is as much a status symbol as the BMWs and the waterfront address. You've got to be earning pretty good money to be doing coke, especially if you're doing it more than once a week ...' (p. 6).

This 'hidden' clique does not use the typical street dealer: it has its own sources, with transactions conducted behind closed, usually expensive, doors. If we are to fully understand the extent and nature of use in this 'hidden' group a concentrated effort by law-enforcement agencies and research institutes will be necessary.

Health professionals from the Kirketon Road Centre claim that cocaine users display more anti-social behaviour than heroin users; this is supported by research. Cocaine addicts are reported to be bolder and to believe they are invincible when affected by the drug. This feeling of invincibility might lead to more brazen criminal behaviour when users are desperate for funds to buy cocaine.

The K2 Needle Exchange, run by the Kirketon Road Centre, reported that the typical cocaine injector comes to the Exchange in a frantic, agitated state, often demanding fast service and paying little or no heed to anyone else or any rules of exchange. Any attempt at conversation with the user usually results in verbal abuse. Such behaviour will influence the way police approach and deal with cocaine users, especially when confronted with a user desperate for their next 'fix'.

Cocaine users who prefer to inject tend to do so in unsafe ways, which makes them more susceptible to blood-borne viruses such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. Law-enforcement officers dealing with cocaine users must be aware that their health and safety may be at risk from such things as needlestick injury or being bitten by the user (Wood 1998).

Health

Cocaine's effects are extremely short lasting—an average hit lasts about half an hour—so the user can 'hit up' to between 10 and 15 times a day when on a binge (Wood 1998). This compares with the average heroin user hitting up two or three times a day.

The Kirketon Road Centre has been interviewing injecting cocaine users and this research has identified a number of problems unique to cocaine use. Like other injecting drug users, cocaine users show a lack of concern for personal hygiene and safety: because of the frequency of injection, though, cocaine users have a greatly increased risk of contracting blood-borne viruses and any increase in the number of such infections will undoubtedly have an impact on the public health system.

Health professionals at the K2 Needle Exchange established in 1997, have been trying to find a way of effectively treating injecting cocaine users. They have found that the approach required with cocaine users is very different from that used with heroin users. While a lot of cocaine users are polydrug users, treatment of cocaine's effects has proved to be a long-term project. Experience has shown that, although the detoxification period for cocaine is shorter than it is for heroin, relapse can occur sooner and occurs at a higher rate than for heroin.

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and the Kirketon Road Centre report that a special residential facility that can provide both counselling and medical treatment is essential for the effective treatment of cocaine addiction. The Kirketon Road Centre deals with only a small area of Australia—primarily Kings Cross and to a lesser extent Redfern—but its experiences in and knowledge of treating injecting cocaine users merit careful consideration.

Conclusions

The stabilising of the demand for cocaine in the United States, partly as a result of the increase in the demand for heroin, may result in international cocaine-trafficking organisations looking to other countries in which to market their product. Australia, with its vast coastline and high volume of maritime cargo, is vulnerable to organisations that may seek to exploit these weaknesses in order to establish a new cocaine market. South American drug-trafficking syndicates have demonstrated by their move into heroin production that they are capable of rapidly responding to changes in world drug markets. While coca production continues despite eradication programs, these syndicates will continue to look for new countries and new ways to market their product.

It would be wrong to assume that South American syndicates are the only groups seeking to target the Australian cocaine market: other criminal groups—Pacific Islanders, Lebanese, Romanians, Nigerians, Anglo-Saxons, and so on—have all been reported as having some form of involvement in the Australian cocaine trade. These groups also tend to be involved in the distribution of other drugs such as heroin and cannabis and synthetic-type substances.

The *Australian Illicit Drug Report 1996–97* drew attention to the potential for the Australian cocaine market to be exploited by cocaine importers. The signs to look for were a significant fall in the price and an increase in the availability of cocaine. Available data for 1997–98 suggest that this is occurring in some areas. But whether cocaine use in the general population is increasing, as it is among regular users, remains to be seen. The increasing availability and declining prices, whilst not epidemic, have been steady and relatively consistent since July 1996.

Nonetheless, the recent emergence of the harmful practice of injecting cocaine among heroin IDUs in Sydney is a matter of concern to health workers. It also has safety implications for police. There is concern that the same practice could spread to other areas.

New South Wales—in particular Sydney—remains the favoured point of entry for cocaine detected at the Customs border, with 78 per cent of the total weight of detected cocaine in 1997–98. Queensland came to notice as the second preferred point of entry for detected cocaine; this is in direct contrast with the previous reporting period, when no detections were made at the border in that State.

Prices for cocaine ‘caps’ have only been reported in Sydney and Adelaide. By comparing prices reported by the Illicit Drug Reporting System (Hando et al. 1998) and those reported by police, it can be seen that up to June 1998 the price for a ‘cap’ of cocaine and a ‘cap’ of heroin was comparable in the two cities during July – September 1997 (Adelaide) and April – June 1998 (Sydney). Otherwise, comparative data is missing for ‘cap’ prices. However, data reported by Hando et al, suggest that the gram price for cocaine was considerably lower than that for a gram of heroin. This should make cocaine more attractive to the user, while the dealer can increase profits because dependent cocaine users need to take the drug more frequently than heroin to satisfy their craving.

The available evidence suggests that the importation of cocaine into Australia is unlikely to decline. The cocaine market has traditionally been relatively small—especially when compared with the heroin market—but there now appears to be a trend towards cocaine use in some areas, at least among regular drug users. It is important that greater efforts be made to determine the extent to which this trend is spreading to the general community and to develop measures to deal with it under the National Drug Strategy.

...The stabilising of the demand for cocaine in the United States, partly as a result of the increase in the demand for heroin, may result in international cocaine-trafficking organisations looking to other countries in which to market their product...

Cocaine: significant seizures, 1997–98

[Note: seizures weighing less than 100 grams are not reported.]

Date	Quantity	Narrative
22 July 1997	3 kilograms	A US citizen arriving at Sydney International Airport from San Francisco was searched by Customs. Cocaine was found in the false bottom of a golf bag.
26 July 1997	3.19 kilograms	A US citizen arriving at Sydney International Airport from Los Angeles was searched by Customs and found wearing a body pack containing six packets of cocaine.
28 July 1997	10 kilograms	Two US citizens arriving at Sydney International Airport from Argentina via Auckland were searched by Customs. Their suitcases were found to contain knapsacks packed with cocaine. Further investigation by the Australian Federal Police resulted in the arrest of another two US citizens at a Sydney hotel.
17 August 1997	750 grams	A routine X-ray inspection at the Customs Bond Store revealed cocaine hidden inside a stereo system sent from Texas.
23 August 1997	1.48 kilograms	A Tongan citizen arriving at Brisbane International Airport from Fiji was found to be wearing body packs containing cocaine and was later arrested by the Australian Federal Police.
2 September 1997	1.1 kilograms	A Tongan citizen arriving at Sydney International Airport from Tonga was searched by Customs and found to be wearing a body pack containing cocaine. He was later arrested by the Australian Federal Police.
9 September 1997	1.94 kilograms	An Australian citizen arriving at Sydney International Airport from Tonga was searched Customs and found to be wearing body packs containing cocaine. The person was later arrested by the Australian Federal Police.
22 September 1997	2.5 kilograms	The luggage of an Argentinian citizen arriving at Sydney International Airport from Brazil via South Africa was searched by Customs. A false-bottomed suitcase containing cocaine was found. A subsequent AFP operation resulted in the arrest of another two people.
22 September 1997	4.4 kilograms	Three passengers arriving at Brisbane International Airport from Fiji were searched by Customs and found to be wearing body packs containing cocaine.
10 & 14 October 1997	7.3 kilograms	Customs in Sydney intercepted two express mail packages from Ecuador. The packages were addressed to a company in Sydney and contained satellite receivers. The first package contained 3.9 kilograms of cocaine and the second package 3.4 kilograms.
24 January 1998	1.97 kilograms	A statue of the Last Supper was handed to Queensland Police at Ipswich. The base of the statue was found to contain cocaine.
26 January 1998	5.98 kilograms	Customs in Sydney intercepted a Federal Express mail service parcel from Peru containing cocaine.
4 March 1998	1.9 kilograms	Customs searched a Colombian citizen at Sydney International Airport and found a suitcase containing cocaine. The passenger had travelled from Colombia via Argentina and New Zealand.
9 March 1998	5.85 kilograms	Customs searched a Colombian citizen at Sydney International Airport and found two suitcases containing cocaine. An overseer was identified. The passenger had travelled from Bogota via Buenos Aires and New Zealand.
5 April 1998	4.5 kilograms	A US citizen arriving at Cairns International Airport from Los Angeles via Sydney was searched by Customs and found with cocaine strapped to his lower body.
12 April 1998	1.9 kilograms	A Canadian citizen of Romanian extraction arrived at Melbourne International Airport from Canada. A search by Customs revealed body packs containing cocaine strapped to her thighs and upper leg. Another Romanian–Canadian was on the same flight, apparently overseeing the importation.
20 April 1998	305.7 grams	A parcel containing two videotapes was intercepted at the Mail Handling Unit in Mascot, New South Wales, by Customs. The parcel that contained cocaine was intended for a Mascot address.
24 April 1998	1.5 kilograms	Cocaine was found concealed in a parcel containing a film projector that had been imported from Argentina using the Federal Express service. The parcel was destined for Annandale, New South Wales. A controlled delivery resulted in the arrest of two people by the Australian Federal Police.
7 May 1998	6 kilograms	A US citizen arriving at Sydney International Airport from Argentina was subjected to a routine Customs search, which revealed cocaine hidden in the framework of his luggage.
26 May 1998	169.4 grams	A parcel containing MDMA was intercepted by Customs. As a result, a search warrant was executed at Crows Nest, New South Wales, where cocaine was also seized.
27 May 1998	1.51 kilograms	Customs in Sydney detected a Federal Express consignment en route to Adelaide containing a wooden statue. The statue had been hollowed out and the cocaine was found inside it. Two people were arrested after a courier collected the parcel.
27 May 1998	1.2 kilograms	A UK citizen arriving at Perth International Airport via Frankfurt, Bangkok and Singapore was searched by Customs and found to have cocaine secreted in one of his bags.
6 June 1998	998.1 grams	A passenger from Guatemala arriving at Sydney International Airport via the United States and Fiji was found by Customs to have cocaine secreted in the lining of his backpack.
10 June 1998	3.9 kilograms	An Argentinian national arriving at Sydney International Airport from Argentina via New Zealand was found by Customs to have cocaine secreted in the lining of his two hard-sided suitcases.
25 June 1998	720 grams	Three people were arrested by Victoria Police after cocaine was seized during a Victoria Drug Squad operation.

Notes

- ¹ Coca plants take between 18 months and two years to reach maturity.
- ² Sydney (n=154), Melbourne (n=254) and Adelaide (n=117).

References

- ABCI 1997, *Australian Illicit Drug Report 1996–97*, Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, Canberra.
- Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria 1998, *Australian Secondary Students' Use of Over-the-counter and Illicit Substances in 1996*, Anti-Cancer Council, Melbourne.
- Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998a, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report for 1997*, US Department of State, Washington, DC. (Internet: http://www.state.gov/www/global/narcotics_law/1997_narc_report/seasi97.html) [cited 13 May 1998]
- Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 1998b, *Map Information Sheet: coca leaf and opium poppy growing regions of the world*, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.
- Chalk, P. 1998, 'Heroin and Cocaine: a global threat', *Janes Intelligence Review*, Special report no. 18, Janes Information Group, UK.
- Hando, J., Darke, S., Degenhardt, L., Cormack, S. & Rumbold, G. 1998, *A Comparison of Drug Use and Trends in Three Australian States: results from a national trial of the Illicit Drug Reporting System*, Monograph no. 36, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales.
- INCB 1998, *International Narcotics Control Board Report for 1997*, United Nations, Vienna.
- Interpol 1997, *World Cocaine Situation Report*, International Criminal Police Organisation, Lyons, France.
- Maxwell, J. 1997, *Comparison of Patterns of Illicit Drug Use in Australia and the United States*, Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Austin, Texas. (Internet:<http://www.+cada.state.tx.us/research/AUS-a4.pdf>)
- McKetin, R., Darke, S. & Godycka-Cwirko, K., 1998, *Drug Trends Bulletin*, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, December.
- United Nations Drug Control Programme 1997, *World Drug Report*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Wood, C. 1998, 'Cocaine Chaos', *Connexions*, August/September.