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**BREAKING NEWS** Police arrest man for allegedly threatening to kill National's Simeon Brown

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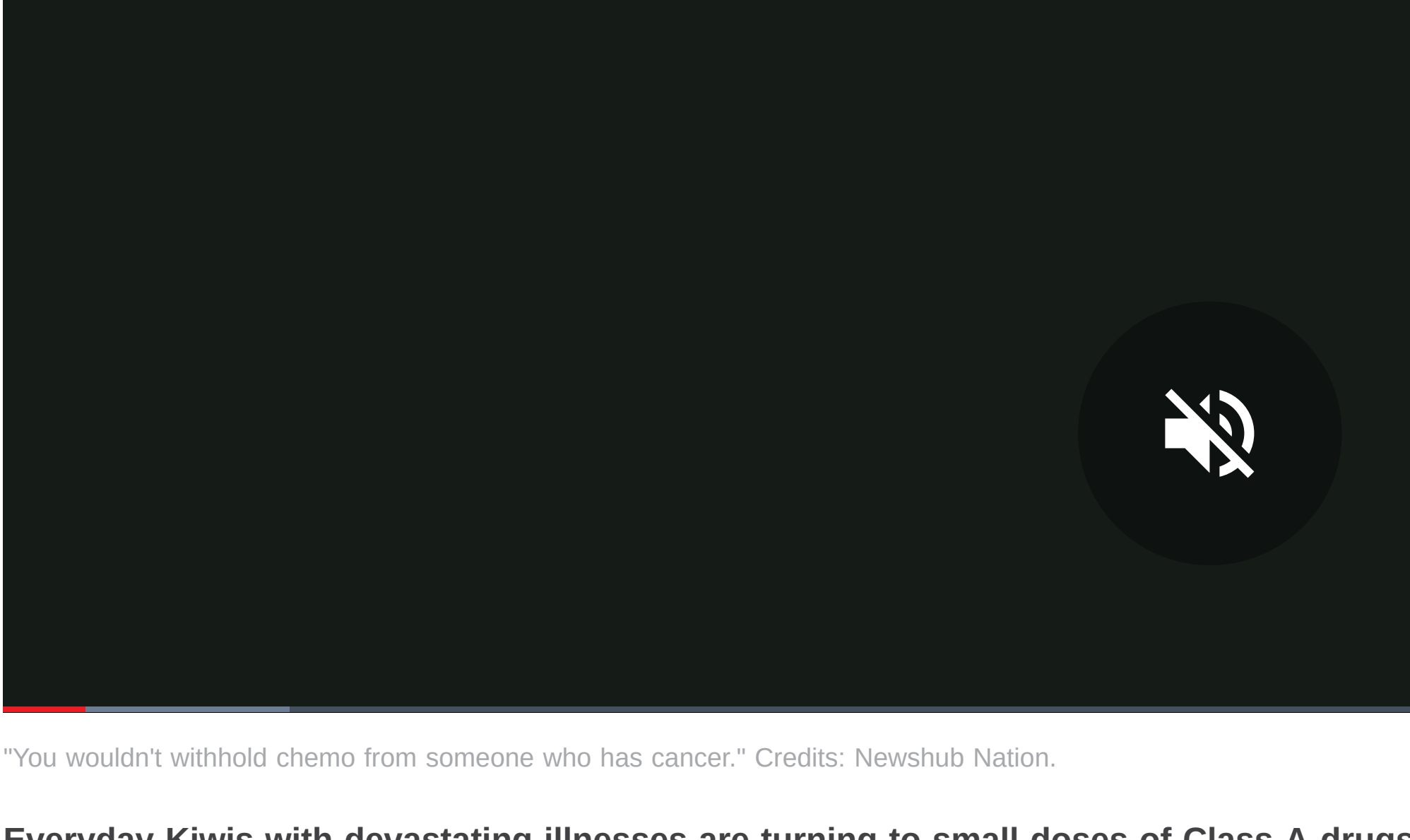
## Magic mushroom microdosing: Sick Kiwis call for 'life-saving' Class-A drug to be legalised

EXCLUSIVE

5 hours ago



Conor Whitten

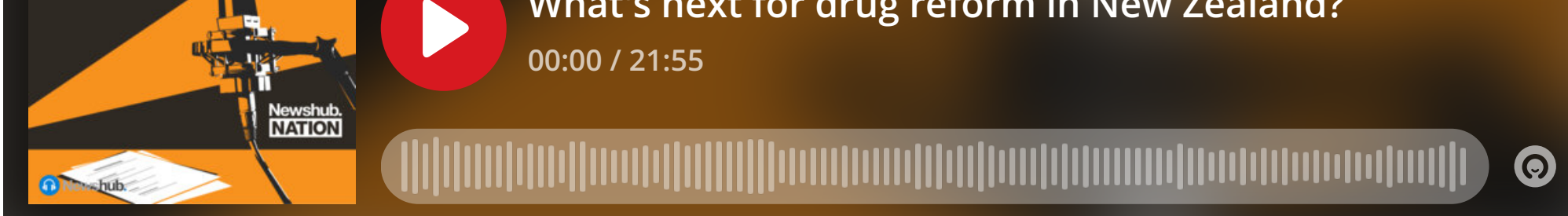


"You wouldn't withhold chemo from someone who has cancer." Credits: Newshub Nation.

**Everyday Kiwis with devastating illnesses are turning to small doses of Class-A drugs to find relief and are calling for what they call a 'life-saving' treatment to be made legal for medical purposes.**

In New Zealand, magic mushrooms and their active ingredient psilocybin sit next to heroin at the top of the list of prohibited drugs, carrying a maximum of life in prison for supply.

But an underground movement of sick Kiwis using the drugs to 'microdose' - taking tiny amounts for medical purposes - are saying psilocybin can work when all other treatments fail.



Kiwis like 43-year old Mum Lori.

"I'm openly admitting on national TV I take class A drugs... I'm concerned about the implications, but I also think it's a story that needs telling," she told Newshub Nation.

Lori's story starts in 2017 with the sudden onset of serious pain.

"I thought I had a brain tumor. I thought I was dying...It is the most excruciating pain you can imagine."

She was diagnosed with cluster headaches, which are considered more painful than kidney stones or even childbirth.

Cluster headaches come in bunches, striking multiple times a day.

"There's a reason cluster headaches are nicknamed suicide headaches. And there are times when you're in the amount of pain where it feels like death is the only way to stop it," said Lori.

Doctors don't understand what causes it. And Lori says treatments often have little effect.

"The only other pharmaceutical medication that could be prescribed to me was lithium, which would mean I can't work, I can't leave my children unattended."

For a single mum, it wasn't an option. So she looked outside the law.

She turned to psilocybin - magic mushrooms.

"At that point, I would have taken anything that showed a glimmer of help," she said.

Lori says she then took a "reasonably high dose", slightly more than an average microdose. The results were immediate.

"And then I had four nights in a row where I slept through the night, which hadn't happened for months. And I didn't have a single cluster attack for four whole days, which was just like...this is going to be a lifesaver."

It's a choice many others like Lori have faced. And for some - "lifesaver" is a literal term.

Michaela was diagnosed in her early teens with psychosis, depression and dissociation. By the time she was 18 had been on 10 different medications.

"The pharmaceuticals never, never helped me. They never made a difference, in fact, that they made me worse. I was very much at the end of my road."

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Michaela decided to try magic mushrooms after receiving advice from a friend.

"I was terrified very much because of the law, but also because it's a psychedelic, it's a hallucinogenic, you don't quite know what effect it's going to have.

"After that first initial dose, the intrusive suicidal thoughts, which I have lived with pretty much my entire life, stopped."

Michaela started microdosing - taking a fraction of a recreational dose. It's not enough for psychedelic effects, but she says the impact was clear.

"By my 15th microdose, I was starting to see shifts in my depression, my anxiety, my PTSD and my disassociation. It saved my life. That's the only way to put it."

Live-saving but still potentially very dangerous under the law. The penalty for growing or supplying magic mushrooms is a maximum of life in jail.

NZ Drug Foundation Executive Director Sarah Helm says the Misuse of Drugs Act is outdated, non-scientific and needs to be rewritten.

"It's meant to be based on evidence of harm - risk of death - risk of addiction, risk to the public health - but rather it seems to be based on no science or evidence whatsoever - and two examples of that are LSD and mushrooms."

A study of the harm caused by drugs was published by medical journal The Lancet, ranking total harm to users and others - with the worst at the top.

Alcohol sits at the top of the list, meaning the drug causing the most harm of all is legal. Heroin is the next most harmful. Methamphetamine and cocaine sit unsurprisingly behind.

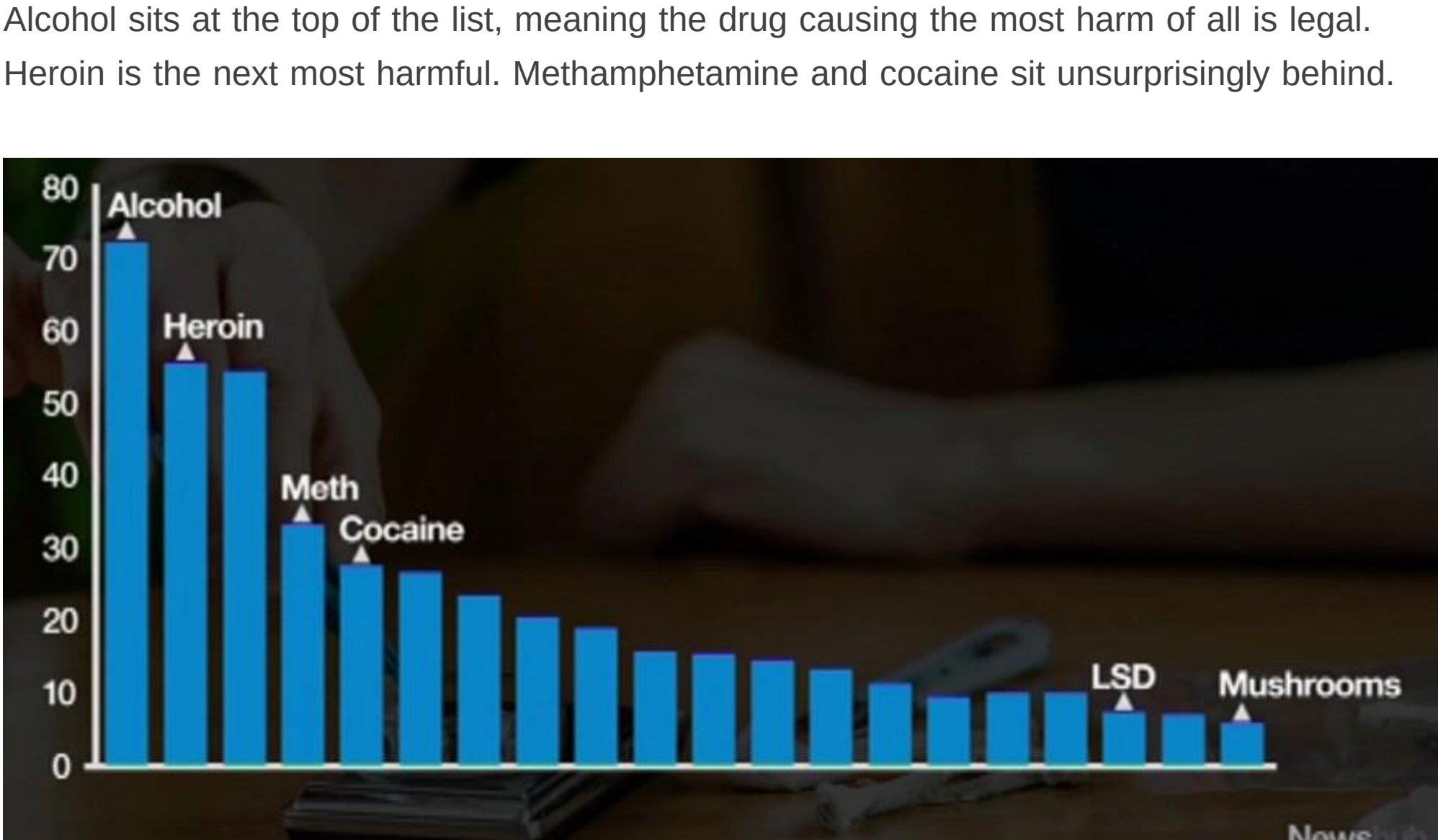


Photo credit: Newshub.

Heroin, meth and coke are class A substances in New Zealand. But so are LSD and magic mushrooms, yet in terms of harm to users and others, they're at the bottom of the Lancet's scale.

The New Zealand Drug Foundation wants the Misuse of Drugs Act rewritten - to focus on harm.

"You have to look at does it have risk to the public, does it have risk of having dependency, what's the risk to their wellbeing, and they seem to be lightyears away from each other," says Helm.

But Health Minister Andrew Little says reform isn't coming anytime soon.

"I'm satisfied it's doing the job at the moment. It's a reasonably old piece of legislation - there will come a time when it's appropriate to review it, but it's not on our agenda at the moment."

The published science on illegal drugs is limited but there's growing evidence magic mushrooms can help with everything from cluster headaches to depression and PTSD.

A landmark study in 2016 by prestigious Johns Hopkins University found two doses of magic mushrooms relieved severe depression for a month.

Now our own experts want to see if these claims stack up.

At the University of Auckland Dr Suresh Muthukumaraswamy is studying the impacts of illegal psychedelics by running new research on microdosing.

"There's a huge amount of excitement, and a huge amount of anecdotal evidence, and some early promising trials," he told Newshub Nation.

"There may be thousands of New Zealanders out there microdosing at the moment and most of them might be doing it for some kind of mental health condition."

Tiny doses of LSD have long been touted in Silicon Valley but now Dr. Muthukumaraswamy is testing their effects here on healthy volunteers.

"It's really important that we study this to get a handle actually of what's going on to see whether this is really working or potentially are they doing harm to themselves?"

More research is needed to provide those answers but Dr. Muthukumaraswamy says LSD and magic mushrooms could one day be legitimate treatments alongside prescription drugs.

For some struggling Kiwis, drugs like mushrooms already act as a kind medicine. They say it should be treated as such.

"I'm not a junkie. I'm not doing this for fun. I'm doing this so that I can parent my children, so that I can contribute to society," says Lori.

Michaela gave up taking mushrooms to share her story with the world.

"You wouldn't withhold chemo from someone who has cancer. You wouldn't withhold heart medication. And my medication is not... it's not legal," says Michaela.

But for now it's done in the dark, leaving Kiwis like her with a difficult question - with their health and lives at stake, what kind of risk is worth the reward?

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