



## **Media Release**

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### **Government avoids effective measures to reduce alcohol-related harm**

Alcohol Healthwatch says New Zealanders can feel short-changed by the Government's response to the Law Commission's report on alcohol laws.

Director Rebecca Williams says although the reform package includes some positive measures, as a whole it is merely a compromise that is unlikely to have much impact on the very issues the government says it wants to address.

"The Government has failed to address the pricing and marketing of alcohol and has not lowered the blood alcohol limit for driving. It has also recommended a split purchase age without any evidence or support for this.

"Increasing the price and restricting the marketing of alcohol are proven to be effective strategies for reducing early drinking and heavy drinking which are at the heart of our hazardous drinking culture.

"Failing to directly address these compromises the health and safety of New Zealanders and does not respond to the significant public support for more comprehensive change."

Ms Williams says the Government was warned by the Law Commission not to "cherry pick" the recommendations and it seems that is exactly what they have gone ahead and done.

"Yes the Government has given communities and parents greater responsibility, but without including the other measures communities will not have the support they need to control local harms resulting from excessive drinking.

"With the continued unbridled marketing and promotion of discount liquor to our communities and young people, the rate and effectiveness of addressing our drinking culture will be compromised."

Of the submitters to the Law Commission 86 percent supported banning or restricting all advertising of alcohol in all media, 76 percent supported introducing a minimum price on alcohol and 77 percent supported increasing current excise tax on alcohol. In addition 78 percent supported increasing the minimum purchase age with 68 percent preferring 20 years. Only 12 percent supported a split age.

Ms Williams says the Government has picked light weight measures and packaged them up as significant law reform.

“New Zealanders deserve better from this once in a generational opportunity presented by the Law Commission’s report.”

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