



MEDIA RELEASE
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Alcohol Healthwatch says the failure of New Zealand's new Road Safety Strategy to promptly lower the adult blood alcohol concentration limit (BAC) is a missed opportunity to save lives.

Safer Journeys – New Zealand's Road Safety Strategy to 2020, which was launched today by Minister of Transport Hon Steven Joyce, includes zero tolerance for alcohol in drivers under 20, but leaves reducing the BAC for adult drivers as an option after further research.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says implementing zero tolerance for under-20s is likely to be counter productive if the adult limit is not also reduced from 0.08 (80mg alcohol/100ml of blood) to 0.05mg (50mg alcohol/100ml of blood) at the same time.

"We now have a huge difference in blood alcohol limits between adults and under-20s and that sends a dangerous and inconsistent message.

"Putting the onus on young people alone to solve this problem is completely unacceptable when adults are not expected to set a positive example."

Drink driving kills about 100 New Zealanders every year, but Ms Williams said evidence from Australia and other countries is extremely clear that lowering the blood alcohol concentration to 0.05 would bring that number down.

"Plenty of research has already been done and we don't need anymore. What we need is prompt action right now.

"Estimates are that a lower limit would save 14 lives and prevent 260 injuries here each year. Sadly, we've just put that off again today, even though a majority of New Zealanders would support the move according to recent polls.

"The current adult limit of 0.08 allows for driving with more than three or four standard drinks in the system which is incredibly unsafe. Most people taking simulation tests acknowledge they are not fit to drive at this level."

Ms Williams said Alcohol Healthwatch did support zero tolerance for young and other inexperienced drivers as it removes the additional risks associated with alcohol, but until the strategy addresses drink driving across the whole population it will not result in 'Safer Journeys'.

She is calling on Transport Minister Hon Steven Joyce to stick with the evidence, manage the politics and lower the drink drive limit for all drivers now.

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Action on Liquor - See www.ahw.org.nz for policy briefing papers on key liquor issues: including Warning Labels, Taxation, Sale of Liquor, Advertising, **Blood Alcohol Concentration for driving** and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.