



## **Media Release**

13 July 2011

**Alcohol Healthwatch supports the measure to include warning messages on alcoholic beverages however, they do not support this being done in a voluntary capacity by the liquor industry as is being progressed in Australia.**

Director Rebecca Williams says that consumers need to have access to consistent, accurate and understandable information about the risks of consuming alcohol. The only way this will be achieved is by regulation.

“As shown by experience of voluntary labelling in other countries, leaving it to the liquor industry to self manage this is both farcical and irresponsible,” says Williams. “You will have labels that are so small you can’t find them, let alone read them. You will have some alcohol with labels, some without. You will have variations in messages and no guarantee of their clarity or accuracy.

“Any links provided on labels must be to websites or free help-lines operated by health professionals and not industry websites with inaccurate or conflicting information.”

Williams notes that most if not all foods, other beverages and pharmaceutical drugs are required to carry both content information and any relevant warnings. Currently alcohol is exempt from these requirements despite it causing the premature death of around 1000 New Zealanders and \$5.3b dollars of harm each year.

Williams says “While it will take more than warning labels to change our problem drinking culture, when used strategically like they have been in the efforts to reduce smoking-related deaths and illness, they will be an effective support strategy.”

### **Media Contact:**

Rebecca Williams  
Director  
Alcohol Healthwatch  
Ph: (09) 520 7035  
Mob: 021 862 250

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