



Media release – 16 December 2011

Zac Guildford sanctions – Rugby Union advised to look in its own backyard

The New Zealand Rugby Union needs to look beyond punishing players who get into trouble with alcohol, says Alcohol Healthwatch.

Commenting on the sanctions dished out to All Black Zac Guildford following his antics in Rarotonga recently, Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says, “While there must be personal consequences for player’s poor behaviour, the NZRU needs to look in its own backyard as well.”

She says evidence clearly links repeated exposure to alcohol marketing messages and ownership of alcohol-related merchandise to early drinking, heavier drinking and the harms associated with these.

“The NZRU is contributing to the exposure of our young people to this stuff repeatedly from the grass roots up, as players and as rugby fans.

“Zac isn't the first and he won't be the last. The NZRU must take action towards ensuring rugby is contributing to address our problem drinking culture and not exacerbating it. The relationship between rugby and alcohol sponsorship must be broken.”

Alcohol consumption detracts from health, hydration and injury recovery so its close ties with sport are hugely questionable.

In a survey released recently 82 percent of New Zealander supported restriction on alcohol advertising and sponsorship.

“While the rest of the country is moving towards alcohol reform the NZRU risks being seen as socially irresponsible,” says Rebecca Williams.

ENDS

Supporting research attached.

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