

Alcohol Healthwatch media release, 14 May 2014

Violence, vomit and vandalism not our future, says Alcohol Healthwatch

Violence, vomit and vandalism are not part of Auckland's vibrancy and liveable city future says Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams.

Auckland Council's Regional Strategy and Policy Committee agreed to adopt the draft Local Alcohol Policy for public consultation at its meeting yesterday morning.

Williams says the draft Local Alcohol Policy provides some real opportunities to get on top of our city's drinking problems. The Council have been working on the drafting for quite some time now and Williams believes it is time to get the draft policy out there to enable the community to determine whether it meets their expectations or not.

Williams says there are a few aspects of the draft policy that need to be tightened up to ensure it delivers on harm reduction objectives.

"For example the draft policy proposes maximum closing hours of 1 am in most areas and 3am in Central Auckland, but then includes capacity to extend those times by two hours. This defeats the purpose of including more restrictive trading hours in the first place."

National maximum trading hours of 4am closing came into force in December last year and Williams says there have been some early indications that this has resulted in reduced alcohol-related crime and violence.

"There is no point in allowing trading up to 5am when we already know that this is contributing to alcohol-related harm. It's simply counterproductive."

In addition, Williams says these extensions could lead to even larger variances between trading hours across the city which will encourage migratory drinking and pre-loading behaviours which are also significant risk factors. The Council has opted out of using a one-way door approach to bridge the gap, something Williams suggests might need reconsideration.

She says another issue with the draft policy is the limited area identified in the Central Business District (CBD) for restrictions.

"The policy highlights only a small part of Queen St and Fort Street as priority areas, but the whole CDB needs increased controls or problems are just going to get shunted from one street to another."

Williams says she's concerned by some of the short-sighted arguments put forward by some people critical of the draft policy.

"They seem more concerned about a mum being able to get a bottle of wine at the supermarket in the early hours of the morning than they are about addressing the havoc caused by the excessive availability of alcohol. Most mums I know would happily forego a bit of convenience knowing that their children or grand children are safer as a result."

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