

## Children's Commissioner speaks out on FASD

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New Zealand's Commissioner for Children, sparked headlines recently when he spoke to the Health Select Committee inquiry into preventing child abuse and improving health outcomes. He told the Committee to take the 'terrifying explosion' of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) he and colleagues are seeing in our communities seriously.

Commissioner Dr Russell Wills, a developmental paediatrician from Hawkes Bay, joins numerous others calling on the Government to recognise and respond to the needs of children affected by FASD, and to work more effectively to prevent it occurring in the first place.

You can listen to Dr Wills discussing his concerns on Radio New Zealand's *Morning Report* on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport>

And while we're on the subject of children...

Speakers at Alcohol Action New Zealand's "*Babies, Children and Alcohol*" Conference held at Te Papa in March are now available online. You can view these at <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9125EDCCEABC7708>

We note that there are three separate reviews/inquiries into child health and well-being underway at present. We have worked to put alcohol on the agenda of all three.

Let's hope that they do result in some meaningful, strategic and sustainable change to improve our appalling record of protecting and promoting the well-being of our children.

## Goodbye ALAC - Hello HPA

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Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012 rather sadly marked the end of the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (ALAC) as we know it, after 35 years.

The Health Promotion Agency formally took over the roles of ALAC, the Health Sponsorship Council (HSC) and parts of the Ministry of Health on the 2 July 2012.

Alcohol Healthwatch would like to acknowledge the former ALAC CEO Gerard Vaughan and former CEO of the Health Sponsorship Council, Iain Potter. We thank them both for their leadership and collegial support, and we recognise the many achievements of their respective tenures.

We welcome Clive Nelson into the role of CEO of the Health Promotion Agency (HPA) and look forward to continuing strong and productive relationships with our colleagues who are now part of the HPA.

## And we're still waiting.....

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In case you thought you missed it - NO the Alcohol Reform Bill has not had its third and final reading in Parliament. Yet another deadline has passed. We're a bit reluctant to advise any new timeframes, however it would be worth keeping eyes and ears peeled from the 14<sup>th</sup> August when Parliament resumes from its next recess.

There are now 8 Supplementary Order Papers lodged with the Bill (as at the time of print). It is expected that Justice Minister Hon. Judith Collins will be lodging one also. There could also be others.

Along with one proposing to return the purchase age to 20 years for both on and off-licences (T. Macindoe, National), there is

another proposing to keep the purchase age at 18 years (N. Kaye, National).

The following is a brief summary of the others:

L. Wall, Labour – Restricts the location of off-licence premises to outside of a 1km radius of an early childhood centre, primary, intermediate, or secondary school.

I. Lees-Galloway, Labour (x2) – One lowers the blood alcohol content for adult drivers from 80mg/L blood to 50mg/L blood. The other bans bill-board and poster advertising within 300m of schools, creates a 9pm watershed for alcohol advertising, restricts alcohol advertising in cinemas and public screenings of films to those with R18 rating, bans discount and price promotion and advertising for alcohol and sets up a interdepartmental committee to plan and implement greater restrictions on all forms of alcohol promotion as recommended by the Law Commission.

K. Hague, Greens (x2) – Local Alcohol Polices would be compulsory, community input would be compulsory and their scope would broaden to beyond licensing issues. Also, the penalty for supplying alcohol to minors would increase from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

T. U. Flavell, Māori Party – Proposes multiple changes to tighten alcohol regulation, including: banning alcohol advertising and sponsorship, including all display and advertising of alcohol in grocery stores and supermarkets (on-licences would be exempt); introducing a sinking lid for 'off-licences' that sell mainly alcohol; introducing a minimum price per unit of alcohol, tightening of the trading hours; enabling the appointment of members to district licensing committees by local iwi or hapu.

Associate Health Minister Peter Dunne has commented numerous times in the media recently asserting that he will not support any further strengthening of the Bill. This doesn't bode well for the passing of any of the above amendments, most of which would respond to

concern about inadequacies of the Bill and bring it closer to meeting the expectations of the community.

It has also been reported that Justice Minister Judith Collins has met with Supermarket interests concerning the provisions in the Bill to restrict alcohol sales and promotions to a single non-prominent area of the store, and that she has met with a group of alcohol industry stakeholders concerning the provisions to restrict the sale of RTDs above 6% alcohol content in off-licences.

## **Time to ditch booze sponsors**

Twelve of Australia's national sporting organisations will be provided funding out of a \$25 million government sponsorship program to provide an alternative to alcohol sponsorship in sport.

The 12 sporting organisations have agreed to end all existing and future alcohol sponsorship agreements and subsequently promote safe alcohol consumption to adults, alcohol-free sporting environments for minors and to reduce alcohol promotion in their respective codes. The sponsorship program has been rolled out as part of the National Binge Drinking Strategy that the Australian Government released in 2008.

The sports include football, netball, swimming basketball, cycling, hockey, athletics, volleyball equestrian, triathlon, canoeing and skateboarding.

The sporting associations will be precluded from sponsorship that promotes alcohol consumption as it would be in conflict with the health campaign message of "Be the Influence, Tackling Binge Drinking". In return for the sponsorship money, the associations will promote the safe drinking message through advertising, uniform branding, sports ambassadors and communication with players, their families and spectators.

The \$25 million replacement funding will come from revenues raised from the 70% increase in alcopops tax, which was introduced in 2008.

Meanwhile, the South African Government is making headway in restricting the advertising and sponsorship of sport by the alcohol industry. The Departments of Social Development and Health want legislation that would in effect prohibit the advertising and promotion of alcohol products. The legislation dealing with alcohol sponsorship is due to be tabled to Cabinet at the end of July; however the intent of this legislation has come with some backlash. The *Control of Marketing of Alcoholic Beverages Bill* which was prematurely leaked into the public domain has caused alarm in industry circles due to what they see as its 'heavy-handed approach'.

The Bill is unlikely to remain in its current form, and is being reworked behind closed doors by an interdepartmental government task team.

So, how is the alcohol industry reacting? South African Breweries (SAB) and its Castle Lager brand announced on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2012 that it has extended its sponsorship of Bafana Bafana (the South African soccer team) for another five years, which is worth about R100m.

Interestingly the new brewery sponsorship deal is significantly less than the previous 5 year contract, which was worth R250m. Not surprisingly though, SAB Head of Sponsorship, Rob Fleming did admit that the TV deal with the national broadcaster which was part of the package, influenced SAB's continued partnership with the South African Football Association. And who says alcohol industry advertising doesn't work??

On a somewhat embarrassing note, a liquor industry spokesperson lobbying against South Africa's proposed changes is using New Zealand as an example of a county that haven't banned alcohol advertising "after finding

evidence that there was no causal link between advertising and alcohol abuse".

It is reassuring to see that some countries are indeed taking steps to end the coercive and damaging relationship between the alcohol industry and sporting associations.

## **Global Policy to Local Action**

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*"Global Policy to Local Action"* – an Alcohol Healthwatch Community Alcohol Forum was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> May in Auckland.

The forum provided the 100 participants with the opportunity to hear presentations on the Global Alcohol Policy Conference, international free trade agreements, the Alcohol Reform Bill, and to hear updates from national and local agencies.



*Professor Jane Kelsey (University of Auckland) discussing Free Trade Agreements at the forum.*

Following the thought provoking presentations, workshops explored how we could translate global policy into local action. Participants identified priority areas of work for alcohol-harm reduction in Auckland, and linked these with associated strategies and actions. They also considered various opportunities and threats that were identified during the day.

The findings from the workshops will help to inform the regional planning process that is currently underway.

For more details on this contact Amy Robinson on [amy@ahw.org.nz](mailto:amy@ahw.org.nz) or ph: (09) 520 7038.

## View Point

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### Responsible drinkers have most to gain

*By Rebecca Williams, Director Alcohol Healthwatch*

Tired old alcohol industry arguments have been tumbling out of the mouths of Government ministers, from the PM down recently, especially in relation to increasing the price of alcohol and other effective measures to reduce alcohol-related harm.

It wouldn't be so bad if there was some truth or even logic to these arguments. The reality is they are long past their self-serving use-by date, and we have the science to prove it.

Typical among these is the throwaway line "we don't want to penalise the responsible drinker".

Firstly, let's spare a thought for the thousands of non-drinkers in New Zealand. Given that the social burden of alcohol-related harm is \$5.3 billion and they play no part in creating this, they are paying through the nose.

Now let's look at these truly "responsible/moderate drinkers", of which there are many thousands more. They enjoy the odd drink now and again, usually limit this to one or two drinks when they do, and probably arrange a sober driver and make sure the children are well-cared too.

If the price of alcohol were to increase, yes they will pay a little bit more for their alcohol, maybe a \$1 or 2 more each drinking occasion.

It's a small cost, and one that between 60-77% of New Zealanders are prepared to pay, understanding that the intervention would contribute to harm reduction.

Increasing the price of alcohol is the best way known to reduce heavy drinking, reduce the up-take of drinking by young people and reduce over-all consumption. The result – less harm less cost to all.

Surely this reflects a fairer approach.

The best the alcohol industry can come up with are education strategies, approaches proven to be ineffective and to cost taxpayers \$millions, while smugly lobbying against effective harm prevention measures and collecting their profits from harmful drinking.

## Coming Events

### 3rd Addiction Research Symposium

27 August 2012, Wellington

For details email: [d.newcombe@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:d.newcombe@auckland.ac.nz)

### Event to mark FASDay

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012, Auckland

For details email: [christine@ahw.org.nz](mailto:christine@ahw.org.nz)

### Cutting Edge 2012: 20/20 both the vision and the thinking for planning our services by 2020

6-7<sup>th</sup> September, Wellington

[www.cuttingedge.co.nz](http://www.cuttingedge.co.nz)

### World Safety 2012 Conference

#### 11th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion

1-4<sup>th</sup> October 2012, Wellington

[www.safety2012.org.nz](http://www.safety2012.org.nz)

### Australasian Road Safety Conference 2012 Research, Policing and Education

4-6<sup>th</sup> October 2012

Wellington

[www.roadsafety2012.co.nz](http://www.roadsafety2012.co.nz)



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