

Policy Brief

Sale and Supply of Liquor and Liquor Enforcement Bill – Written submissions on this Bill closed on 23rd April 2009, and are currently being considered by the Justice and Electoral Select Committee. Dates for oral submissions are yet to be advised.

Law Commission Review – The Commission presented the first of three reports to Parliament on 12th May 2009. This report suggests an end to the conscience vote.

The report - *Review of Regulatory Framework for the Sale and Supply of Liquor Part 1 Alcohol Legislation and the Conscience Vote* is available at <http://www.lawcom.govt.nz/ProjectReport.aspx?ProjectID=154>

No more off-licences

It's time to put a stake in the sand and say NO to further issuing of liquor off-licences until effective mechanisms are in place to protect the health and safety of communities.

Alcohol Healthwatch director Rebecca Williams calls on Porirua City Council and other councils to respond positively to community calls for protection against further alcohol-related harm.

The Cannons Creek community in Porirua have asked their Council for a moratorium on the issuing of all new liquor off-licences. This action follows their recent success in preventing an off-licence application from going ahead. While the Cannons Creek community have been successful, many others have failed in their bids to stop further increases in liquor outlet density or address other concerns about liquor licensing. Issues

such as outlet density and opening hours are linked to increased alcohol-related harm.

Williams says that while we wait for the Sale and Supply of Liquor and Liquor Enforcement Bill to be considered and the Law Commission Review on alcohol to be completed communities remain at risk. She says we are probably years away from having adequate mechanisms in place to protect their interests.

There are over 14,500 liquor outlets in New Zealand and we are witnessing a 10 year upward trend in per capita consumption. A halt to the issuing of off-licences would provide communities with some level of protection until our nation gets its act together on alcohol.

Māori Pathways

It is generally accepted that more needs to be done to address the specific health inequalities that exist for Māori in relation to alcohol. Yet Māori and alcohol is not an easy subject to discuss let alone address. For many years discussion on Māori drinking has been affected by 'deficit thinking' interpretations; for instance, it's not uncommon for New Zealanders to believe that Māori have a weakness for alcohol and that Māori actually have a biological/genetic predisposition to alcohol addiction. These views have been around for a long time and relate to the history of how New Zealand was colonized. The corollary upshot of this is that it has affected the way in which solutions to Māori drinking issues have been looked for. On one hand discussions on Māori and alcohol hold several areas of caution in terms of both 'deficit thinking' and Māori as 'passive victims', on the other it makes enormous sense to get our heads around the forces and factors that have

shaped Māori patterns of alcohol drinking. In this respect we may actually begin to acknowledge the way in which alcohol misuse is socially patterned. Mendoza and Fluentes-Allick (1999) in the *Western Journal of Medicine* make a case, in their Family-Community Health Promotion Model, for studying and understanding the social and cultural histories of families and communities if we are going to draw on their strengths effectively. Such an approach for example brings into focus the way Māori and non-Māori relationships have been forged and contested around colonization; as well as eliciting key questions about the existence of not only alcohol-related health disparities but other health and social inequities.

Within this scope, Alcohol Healthwatch through funding from Ministry of Health, have established a Māori Advisory Group to look at the matter of Māori drinking harms from a Kaupapa Māori perspective and build some worthy analysis towards identifying solutions. A primary goal of the Māori Advisory Group is the development of a briefing paper that will be aimed at Māori determining their solutions, as well as promoting the concept of Māori and non-Māori working together to achieve those solutions. Whilst looking at solutions the Advisory Group will consider structural issues as well as individual remedies. The key point is the need for full commitment to eliminate not only Māori alcohol-related health disparities but also to reduce the risks of harm from alcohol misuse for all New Zealanders, especially our young people.

For more information contact Health Promotion Advisor Todd Bell ph: 913 7547 or todd@ahw.org.nz.

Influence of alcohol on adolescent brains

Alcohol and marijuana use are common during adolescence. In youth with as little as 1-

2 years of heavy drinking and consumption levels of 20 drinks per month, abnormalities have been seen in brain structure, volume, white matter quality and activation to cognitive tasks; especially if more than 4-5 drinks are consumed on a single occasion. Heavy marijuana users show some subtle anomalies too, but generally not to the same degree of divergence from demographically similar non-using adolescents. A recent article reviews the extant literature on neuro-cognition, brain structure, and brain function in adolescent substance users with an emphasis on the most commonly used substances, and in the context of ongoing neuro-maturational processes.

Squeglia et al. The Influence of Substance Use on Adolescent Brain Development. Journal of Clinical EEG & Neuroscience, January, 2009.
http://www.ecnsweb.com/ce_table_of_contents.htm

At what cost?

A new report estimates the cost of harmful alcohol and other drug use in New Zealand to be \$6.9 billion in the year 2005/06. The proportion attributable to alcohol is over 75% (\$4.79 billion). That's over \$13 million a day.

The report by Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL), "Cost of Harmful Alcohol & Other Drug Use" (March 2009), was commissioned by the Ministry of Health and the Accident Compensation Commission in order to obtain an up to date estimate of the social cost imposed on New Zealand by harmful alcohol and other drug (AOD) use (excluding tobacco). The total costs consisted of tangible costs such as crime, health, road crashes, lost output and the intangible costs of morbidity and mortality.

Some costs, such as those associated with prenatal alcohol exposure appear to have been under-estimated in the analysis.

To their credit, the authors acknowledge that their estimate of the intangible costs from

'poor health' caused by harmful AOD use is likely to be 'underestimated'.

It is difficult to surmise whether a higher figure would be more likely to generate greater responsiveness toward reducing alcohol-related health and social cost. If draining the economy and society of over \$13 million a day doesn't do it, what will?

You can find the report at <http://www.ndp.govt.nz>

World Mobilises on Alcohol



While New Zealand sits in a strategic planning vacuum the World Health Organisation (WHO) is striding toward a global strategy to inform policy options for Member States.

Following the adoption of a resolution at the 61st World Health Assembly in May 2008 an online consultation was conducted later in 2008, calling on inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, health professionals, economic operators and the public to comment on ways to contribute to reducing harmful use of alcohol.

As a result a discussion document '*Toward a global strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol*' (WHO 2009) was prepared. Representatives from member states in the Asia Pacific Region met in Auckland in March to provide feedback on the discussion paper.

As well as proposing the scope, aims and objectives of a Global Strategy the discussion paper puts forward 10 proposed target areas. These are:

- Raising awareness and political commitment
- Health sector response
- Community action
- Drink-driving policies
- Addressing the availability of alcohol

- Addressing the marketing of alcohol beverages
- Pricing policies
- Harm reduction
- Reducing the public health impact of illegal and informal alcohol
- Monitoring and surveillance

There are some significant challenges ahead, particularly in regard to the political and economic barriers that stand in the way of effective harm reduction; establishing a set of motivational indicators on which to measure progress and achievement; and the need to build capacity in the workforce and the community to reduce alcohol-related harm.

The discussion document doesn't adequately recognise and respect the needs and rights of indigenous populations in the process of engagement; and the value of integrating cultural and traditional practices in harm reduction.

Alcohol Healthwatch applauds the work that has gone into the development of this global strategy to date. It will provide an important policy reference point for what is now a significant global problem and determinant of health.

It is an exciting prospect to be entering a new era of global commitment to reducing alcohol-related harm. Hopefully it is a step towards a Framework Convention on Alcohol similar to that in place for tobacco.

http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/activities/msb/discussionpaper.pdf

Alcohol portrayal increases drinking

An experimental study in a naturalistic setting of a bar in the Netherlands, has demonstrated a causal link between the media portrayals of alcohol and acute consumption levels. Randomly selected male students ranging in age from 19-29 years were recruited and asked

to come with a male friend. While all being allowed to drink non-alcohol and alcoholic beverages, the 40 friendship pairs were assigned to one of 4 conditions that included a one hour movie clip with two commercial breaks. The results were quite straightforward. Those in the condition with alcohol portrayal in movie and commercial drank on average 1.5 glasses more in the one hour period than those exposed to no alcohol portrayal. This study demonstrated for the first time a direct causal link between increased alcohol consumption and the persuasive power of alcohol images in the media.

Engels et al, (2009) Alcohol Portrayal on Television Affects Actual Drinking Behaviour. Alcohol & Alcoholism. pp. 1-6.

View Point by Rebecca Williams Director Alcohol Healthwatch

Advertising and sponsorship – It's staring us in the face yet we chose to ignore it.

The front page of the sports section of the New Zealand Herald on Monday 20th April featured the winners of the Hamilton 400 V8 Supercar Championships. While the heading gave the victory to Ford (sorry Holden fans) the picture handed the top prize to Jim Beam, sponsors and dressers of the three winning drivers - smiling, successful and proudly holding the trophy aloft.

In the main news section of same paper the Supercar event organisers described it as a "family event" when defending their efforts to ensure the promo girls weren't too scantily dressed.

Also in the main news section was a report on a drink-drive blitz that caught nearly 300 drivers over the legal limit during an operation in Papakura and Manukau over the same weekend.

What is it about this that we don't get?

The link between alcohol and road crash is undeniable, alcohol consumption is responsible for around 30% of our road deaths each year. Yet, we seem to have no problem with allowing sponsorship of an event that links alcohol with both cars and speed.

Similarly we turn a blind eye to the sponsorship of other sport or recreational activities; rugby, league, surfing, fishing, horse-racing, film festivals and the list goes on.

We have highlighted the impacts of exposure to alcohol marketing in previous editions of this newsletter and regularly in our submissions on reviews, plans or legislation before Parliament, as have many others.

This exposure continues via television, radio, cinema, bill-boards, internet and mobile technology, skilfully recruiting generation after generation of young drinkers into our drinking culture. Still politicians and policy makers ignore the obvious and fail to act to control it.

Coming Events

Thinking Drinking 3 - Action for Change

5th -7th August 2009

Brisbane, Australia

www.adf.org.au for more details

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