ALCOHOL HEALTHWATCH

Briefing Paper
August 2003

The Advertising of Alcohol:

In Support of Increased Restrictions

This Alcohol Healthwatch policy briefing paper contains information on:

- Why alcohol advertising is a public health issue
- The impact of alcohol advertising and sponsorship on drinking norms
- Trends in alcohol advertising
- Arguments and counter-arguments for discontinuing alcohol advertising
- Policy options for increased restrictions on alcohol marketing
- Alcohol Healthwatch's position on alcohol advertising

This paper is one of a set of 5 that includes:

- Changes to Excise Tax for Alcohol
- Health & Safety Advisory Statements for Alcohol
- **The Advertising of Alcohol - In Support of Increased Restrictions**
- Reduction of Legal Blood Alcohol Concentration for Driving
- The Sale of Liquor in New Zealand – Recommended Changes to the Act

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Promotion of Alcohol is a Public Health Issue

- Alcohol consumption ranks third of all leading risk factors for disease in the developed world (World Health Report, 2002). Particularly alarming is the trend in New Zealand, as in comparable countries, for young people to be drinking more heavily, more frequently and at an earlier age.

- Estimates of the annual cost of alcohol-related harm to New Zealand society vary from $1.4 – $4 billion (Devlin et al. 1996) and, taking into account intangible costs, up to as much as $16 billion (Easton, 1997).

- The promotion of alcoholic beverages to society through advertising is at odds with public welfare and with society's attitude to other drugs. Internationally there is growing recognition of the need for governments to address the way alcohol is promoted to society through marketing.

The Effects of Alcohol Advertising

- Alcohol advertising is noticed by children in their formative years when their attitudes towards the use of alcohol are developing (Wyllie et al. 1989). Advertisers frequently make use of lifestyle images appealing to young people in subtle and highly sophisticated ways, without overtly breaching the advertising codes. The cumulative effect of these repeated positive associations with drinking fosters positive beliefs and expectations about alcohol and encourages early drinking.

- The negative effect of alcohol advertising on public health is difficult to categorically prove and studies relating alcohol advertising to population consumption have shown inconsistent results. However, there is evidence that advertising is at least reinforcing drinking among the young and this evidence is strengthening. Studies of children and young people's responses to alcohol advertising increasingly suggest a complex link exists between advertising and young people's drinking. *"In essence, the more familiar, aware and appealing the advertisement is to targeted groups, the more likely they are to drink now and in the future"* (Cooke et al. 2002).

- The saturation of society with alcohol advertising serves to maintain the norm of drinking as a socially desirable activity. Drinking is generally presented as a positive, glamorous or sexy activity promoting feelings of togetherness, relaxation and fun. "Branding", or the attaching of powerful emotional associations and imagery to the product, is an important technique used in selling alcohol.

- The acceptance of alcohol advertising helps to establish and maintain a social climate of tolerance around alcohol. An effect of this is that other public policies, such as raising the minimum purchase age, or a lowered blood alcohol concentration for driving, may be less likely to be accepted and implemented (WHO, 1994).

Trends in Alcohol Marketing

- There is a trend in alcohol advertising towards use of a broad range of media promotion methods such as sponsorship, competitions and special promotions, and to exploit new,

unregulated media. Internet controls on alcohol marketing are virtually non-existent and regulation will demand concerted international effort.

- Sponsorship by the alcohol industry has become common in key areas of popular culture including sport, music, film, fashion, television. There is also growing involvement of the alcohol industry in educational institutions. By extending its sphere of influence into these regions, the alcohol industry is maximising youth vulnerability to advertising and their important market potential. Sport is the most developed example of this trend — it has a large youthful audience who are a valuable investment for the alcohol industry in establishing the future long-term adult drinkers. In New Zealand, an unhealthy dependence of sports clubs, teams and events on financial support from breweries has been allowed to develop.

- The alcohol industry has moved with shifts in youth culture by producing new products heavily branded and targeted to respond to these changes (Jackson et al. 2000). *"Research suggests that new product development by the alcohol industry is having an impact on young people's drinking and is associated with increased drunkenness and dangerous behaviour."* (Cooke et al. 2002)

- The alcohol industry's marketing budgets dwarf its expenditure on supporting educational and community activities. In 1998 there was approximately $52 million worth of product and sponsorship advertising on television, radio, magazines and press (AC Nielsen, 1999).

An Environmental Approach to Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm

- The prevention of alcohol-related harm has moved away from a focus on the individual toward approaches which recognise the interactions between the individual and the environment (Kilbourne, 2000).

- We have a culture of drinking in New Zealand that commonly accepts intoxication as normal drinking practice. Restricting the advertising of alcohol is an essential part of a mix of strategies which must be collectively implemented to reduce alcohol-related harm in New Zealand.

A Review of Government Policy on Alcohol Advertising

- Alcohol Healthwatch believes the current self-regulatory system is not adequate to stem the marketing of advertising to young people and to minimise the role advertising plays in creating and maintaining a culture of hazardous drinking in New Zealand. Nor does the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) review process allow for a full and independent investigation into the impacts of alcohol advertising.

- Alcohol Healthwatch calls for an independent review of government policy on alcohol advertising. The advertising of alcoholic beverages is an important public health issue and should be assessed in the context of government aims of reducing alcohol-related harm as stated, for example, in the National Alcohol Strategy 2000 and in the object of the Sale of Liquor Act 1989. Such a review should include:
  - assessment of the role advertising plays in the social climate around alcohol use in New Zealand,
  - the impact of alcohol advertising on the most vulnerable sectors of New Zealand

society,
- whether alcohol advertising should be permitted in New Zealand and,
- how, if we are to allow alcohol advertising, we are going to minimise its role in validating an unhealthy drinking culture in New Zealand.

Alcohol Healthwatch's Policy

- Alcohol Healthwatch's preferred policy option is a discontinuation of alcohol advertising in New Zealand controlled media, and a gradual phasing out of alcohol industry sponsorship. In light of current disturbing trends of early onset and heavy drinking patterns among youth, the evidence we have that advertising is reinforcing drinking is enough to justify a discontinuation of advertising.

  Since a partial ban is likely to result in substitution to other available media (Saffer, 2002), the ban must be comprehensive, including as many forms of media promotion as possible.

- Tighter restrictions must also be applied to the development, naming and packaging of alcoholic products.

- Failing a broad discontinuation of alcohol advertising, other options for increased restriction of alcohol marketing must be given serious consideration. Policy options briefly discussed in this paper are: mandatory health messages, restriction of lifestyle advertising, increased counter-advertising, removing the tax deductibility of advertising, restrictions on placement and saturation of advertisements, and tighter restrictions on new product marketing.

- If, pending a government review, alcohol advertising is to remain in New Zealand, Alcohol Healthwatch recommends that the self-regulatory system be replaced by a statutory body which oversees all forms of alcohol promotion. If alcohol advertising jurisdiction is to remain with the ASA, the drafting of codes, adjudication of complaints and future reviews must be undertaken by an independent panel which has a majority of representatives with a background in public health.

- Such a strategy must be accompanied by ongoing monitoring of exposure to alcohol advertising by target groups in all media.

- Alcohol Healthwatch has identified five priority areas for change in its Action on Liquor Legislation campaign. Restrictions on advertising will achieve most as part of a collective strategy to create a legislative environment that is more supportive of reducing alcohol-related harm.

Section 1.

THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ADVERTISING

Introduction

Promotion of alcohol is at odds with public welfare

Alcohol is a drug and its use is known to be associated with many adverse consequences. Alcohol consumption ranks third of all leading risk factors for disease in the developed world (World Health Report, 2002) and predictions are for this relative burden of alcohol-related disease to increase (Rehm, 2003). Particularly alarming in our own country, but consistent with trends in comparable countries, is the increase in frequency and volumes of alcohol being consumed by younger age groups (Habgood et al. 2001).

While there are many factors contributing to this trend, the teenagers of today have grown up with more alcohol advertising than any other generation. The promotion of alcoholic beverages to society through advertising is at odds with public welfare and with society's attitudes to other drugs.

Dr Marc Danzon, Regional Director of the World Health Organisation (2001), asked why alcohol is *treated almost everywhere as a normal consumer product, widely advertised and available in major retail outlets, yet its consumption by young people increasingly mirrors patterns of drug use?*

Growing international response to alcohol promotion

Throughout the western world there is growing recognition of the need for governments to address the way alcohol is promoted to society through marketing, and to collaborate in doing so. *The global nature of the marketing demands an international response, a response at international, national and local level.* (WHO Technical Consultation on the Marketing and Promotion of Alcohol to Young People, Valencia, 2002)

Many governments have already taken strong steps to restrict the marketing of alcohol. *See page 25.*

In New Zealand, we are waking up to the fact that the advertising of products with known harms is a public health issue which demands greater control. The battle against tobacco advertising in New Zealand has been won and, as we are becoming aware of the impacts of fast foods on our health and economy, there are increasing calls for restrictions and possibly bans of their advertising. Questions have also been raised recently concerning the appropriateness of the advertising of prescription medicines. It is inevitable that the advertising of alcohol, as well as these products, will eventually be further restricted in New Zealand in the interests of public health.

The alcohol industry depends on new recruits and high risk drinking

The alcohol industry claims that securing brand allegiance is the only purpose of advertising. According to a leading US analyst of the advertising industry Jean Kilbourne, (1999) all advertising has three main purposes: *to recruit new customers, to increase use of goods or services among existing customers, and to help potential customers choose among competing brands.*

Although claiming they want to promote moderate alcohol use, the alcohol industry depends on high risk drinking for its profits (Kilbourne, 1999). In New Zealand, about 10 percent of drinkers consume almost half of the total alcohol, in 1995 drinking the equivalent of at least 31 cans of beer a week (Wyllie et al. 1995). These groups of heavy drinkers may be particularly susceptible to alcohol advertising, as well as being particularly targeted.

How Does Alcohol Advertising Affect Young People?

> *All children and adolescents have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and, to the greatest extent possible, from the promotion of alcoholic beverages.* (Principle 3, European Charter on Alcohol, 1995)
>
> *I do not believe that most people or even most parents realise the extent to which youth is now being targeted by the alcohol interests. That has to be brought to light.*
> (Dr Gro Bruntland WHO Director General, 2001)
>
> *Over the past 10–15 years, we have seen that the young have become an important target for marketing of alcoholic products. When large marketing resources are directed towards influencing youth behaviour, creating a balanced and healthy attitude to alcohol becomes increasingly difficult. Based on these concerns, I am calling for a concerted review by international experts of this issue of marketing and promotion of alcohol to young people.* (Dr Gro Brundtland, WHO Director-General, Stockholm 2001)

Patterns of youth drinking in New Zealand are worsening

A third of all 14-17 year olds are currently classified as heavier drinkers (ALAC Youth Drinking Monitor, 2002). Between 1995 and 2000, young people increased both their frequency of drinking and typical consumption. Over this period the average 14-15 year old became a weekly drinker, increasing their frequency of drinking from 42 to 64 occasions per year. Their typical consumption increased from 3 to 5 drinks. Sixteen to seventeen year olds increased frequency of drinking from 76 to 110 occasions per year and typical consumption from 4 to 7 drinks (Habgood et al. 2001).

Young people are especially vulnerable to the effects of alcohol

Young people experience disproportionate harm from their drinking compared with the same amount drunk by older drinkers (Wyllie et al. 1996). Developmentally they are still in a period of rapid brain growth and behaviourally prone to risk taking. Psychologically, young people are forming personal identities, and are therefore vulnerable to advertisers' readiness to supply them.

It is well established that the younger the onset of drinking, the increased likelihood of outcomes such as injuries, fatalities and unsafe sex, as well as longer term outcomes such as alcohol dependence and alcohol-related medical conditions. Dangers of alcohol use for

young people include: injury and motor vehicle accidents, depression and increased risk of suicide, substance abuse, high risk sexual activity, violence, decreased scholastic and work performance and future dependence.

New Zealand also has some of the worst statistics in the OECD for youth suicide, drug use, teenage pregnancy and motor vehicle accidents (Watson, 2001), in all of which alcohol involvement is well established.

Advertising helps form positive associations with alcohol

While brand allegiance may be more a factor in established, mature audiences, alcohol advertising is noticed by children in their formative years when their attitudes towards the use of alcohol are developing (Wyllie et al. 1989). The cumulative effect of repeated positive associations with drinking fosters positive beliefs and expectations about alcohol and encourages early drinking.

The current Advertising Standards Authority Code for Advertising Liquor does not allow the use of models under 25 years nor allow advertisements appearing to target young people in particular. However, many alcohol advertisements make use of lifestyle images appealing to young people in subtle and highly sophisticated ways, without overtly breaching the codes.

> *" I don't think the industry wants little children to drink, however they do want them to have positive attitudes, positive associations with alcohol, long before they start to drink. The alcohol industry understands that adolescents are anxious to enter into adults only behaviour, such as drinking* (Kilbourne, 1999).

Young people are the alcohol industry's most important customers. Not only are they a substantial part of the market, but are in the process of establishing themselves as long term adult drinkers. There is some evidence that young people are being targeted by advertisers. For example a US study looked at $320 million worth of alcohol advertising in magazines during 2001 and compared data on how much each magazine was looked at by teenagers or adults. The researchers found that youth aged between 12 and 20 years saw 45 percent more beer ads and 27 percent more distilled spirits advertisements than adults over 21 years (Centre for Media Education, 2000). *Parents aren't seeing these advertisements but children are, because that's where the industry is putting them – in the magazines their kids read* (O'Hara, 2001).

Magazines with young readership published in New Zealand do not yet appear to be heavily targeted by the alcohol industry. However, with the growth of new media and marketing techniques, there is an urgent need to monitor where and how our young people are being exposed to alcohol advertising, and to establish robust regulatory mechanisms.

What Other Groups are Particularly Vulnerable to Alcohol Advertising?

Maori and Pacific

The average quantity of alcohol consumed per occasion by Maori drinkers is almost twice that of the general population (Dacey, 1995). There has been little research on the impact of alcohol advertising on maintaining this high level of consumption. Maori and Pacific young

people are a fast growing group in New Zealand and advertisers will be well aware of this fact. Sponsorship of sports may be particularly effective in reaching Maori and Pacific communities.

Women
There has been a marked increase in consumption by women in New Zealand over recent years (Habgood et al. 2001). Although there has been little monitoring of exposure to alcohol advertising across various media, it appears that women are now being increasingly targeted, especially in the print media.

Those dependent on alcohol
Advertising can also provide unwanted temptation for people who are wishing to cut down or abstain. *The (alcohol) advertisements increased feelings of exclusion from normal life. Nearly all the respondents reported that exposure to alcohol advertising had made it more difficult to abstain at some stage of their sobriety, with some holding it responsible for their relapse* (Thompson et al. 1997).

What Does Research on Alcohol Advertising Tell Us?

Alcohol advertising research generally falls into 2 categories:
1. Studies which examine statistically the effects of advertising (often measured by expenditure) on a population's alcohol consumption. These are commonly called econometric studies and;
2. Studies which focus on the effects of exposure to alcohol advertising on attitudes and behaviour in the young.

The argument put forward by the advertising industry is that alcohol advertising is targeted to reinforce brand identity, offset brand-switching and maintain market share rather than encourage greater levels of consumption.

While the subtlety of alcohol advertising makes large effects of alcohol advertising on consumption difficult to categorically prove, evidence of the contributory effect of advertising on drinking is significant and is strengthening.

1. Econometric studies

Much debate has been caught up in the argument as to whether a causal relationship can be shown to exist between alcohol advertising and overall alcohol consumption of a population. This research is often quoted by advertising and alcohol industry representatives. Some studies have been funded by industry sources.

Measuring effect of alcohol advertising by population consumption trends is flawed
There have been many suggestions that measuring the effect of advertising by looking at consumption trends of the whole population is flawed. Reasons include: the complexity of alcohol control policies in various countries, difficulty isolating the effects of advertising, and population dynamics. Another reason put forward by Saffer (2002), is the concept of diminishing marginal product, which means that, because alcohol is heavily advertised, the marginal effect on increased consumption will be small and difficult to measure. A literature review conducted for the World Health Organisation (WHO) also found significant flaws in

many econometric studies, with data on key variables missing and naive models of advertising effect used (Cooke et al. 2002). These studies are usually related to crude consumption levels and so do not show the impact of alcohol advertising on sub-groups. For example; although there was no change in volume of alcohol consumed overall between 1995 and 2000 in New Zealand, there were marked increases in the volume consumed among males aged 14-15 years, and even larger increases for males aged 16-17 years — from 8 to 20 litres (Habgood et al. 2001). Cooke et al. (2002) suggest that the slight and inconsistent effect often reported in these studies actually reflects an averaging of minimal influences on older drinkers and larger effects on immature younger drinkers (Aiken and Hastings, 1992).

"Small but significant connections"

The overall conclusion of Cooke et al. (2002) was that survey research on alcohol advertising and young people *consistently indicates small but significant connections between exposure to and awareness of alcohol advertising and drinking beliefs and behaviours.*

Studies of the effects of advertising bans

Some studies have attempted to assess the impact of alcohol advertising bans on consumption. Such studies are complicated by the fact that such bans are rarely complete, attract media attention and may be counteracted by transference of advertising to other marketing (Harrison and Godfrey, 1989). It is also not possible to stop advertising overall from other countries. Results of such studies have been contradictory. However, a major study (Saffer, 1991) of bans implemented in several OECD countries in the 1970's did show that those countries with bans had *about 16 percent lower alcohol consumption and 23 percent lower number of traffic fatalities than countries with no bans, while those countries with bans only on spirits advertising showed 11 percent lower consumption.* Saffer (1991) points out that is likely that these differences also reflect other changes in these societies, given that the social climate had reached the stage which made a ban possible in the first place.

2. Studies of young people's responses to advertising

Studies of the effects on alcohol advertising on the individual are being given increasing weight. They have been especially useful in showing the impact of advertising on young people. Cooke et al's (2002) review for the WHO concludes that: "*Many of these studies , in particular more recent studies involving sophisticated methodologies, point to the link between advertising and young people's drinking behaviours. In essence, the more familiar, aware and appealing the advertisement is to targeted groups, the more likely they are to drink now and in the future".*

Evidence of the link between advertising and drinking is strengthening

There are now a significant number of studies, from New Zealand and overseas, which have shown the link between alcohol advertising and the intention to drink, or earlier and heavier drinking: (Casswell and Zhang, 1998), (Atkin et al. 1983), (Grube and Wallack, 1994), to name a few. These have been widely reported elsewhere. One such study was that of Wyllie et al. (1998), who, in a sample of New Zealand children aged 10-17 years, found that those young people who liked the television advertisements more than others were more likely to say that they would be drinking at least weekly by 20 years old; and among 14-17 year olds, those who expressed the greatest liking for the advertising were also the heaviest drinkers.

Liking of advertisements was linked with the feeling that *"drinking makes life more fun and exciting"* and *"people get on better together when they've had a few drinks"*.

Other qualitative studies have provided insights into children's perceptions of and responses to alcohol advertisements (Aitken et al. 1988), (Casswell, 1995).

Longitudinal studies have demonstrated a correlation between recall of alcohol advertisements and later drinking. For example Connolly et al. (1994) used the Dunedin Childhood Development longitudinal study to demonstrate how recall of advertising at 15 years was significantly related to larger quantities of beer being consumed at 18 years; and those who responded positively to alcohol advertising at age 18 were heavier drinkers and reported more alcohol related aggression at age 21 (Casswell and Zhang, 1998). Casswell et al. (2002) have shown that these effects now go up to age 26. While amounts, but not frequency of drinking had declined for most of the young people, those who had responded most positively to alcohol advertising at age 18 were the most frequent drinkers at age 26.

Some studies demonstrate the complex dynamics in the relationship between consumers, advertisements and advertiser. Connelly et al (1994), for example, showed how beer drinkers will be drawn towards beer advertising, are more likely to be targeted by beer advertisers, which will in turn reinforce their liking for beer.

How Does Advertising Affect the Social Norms Associated With Use of Alcohol?

Advertising Maintains the Norm

The saturation of society with alcohol advertising serves to maintain the norm of drinking as a socially desirable activity. As with all advertising, this works simply by association with positive emotional responses to images that, over time, shape our perceptions. *These recurring representations shape perceptions of social norms and practices, and contribute to the maintenance and reinforcement of the position of alcohol in contemporary culture* (Montonen, 1996).

In advertisements, drinking is generally presented as a positive, glamorous or sexy activity promoting feelings of togetherness, relaxation and fun. Hill (1999) discusses how beer advertising contributes to "what it means to be a man" in New Zealand and how traditional elements of Kiwi masculinity in sports and nationalism are exploited to promote drinking by young men.

In this way, advertising plays a role in creating and maintaining a culture of drinking in New Zealand that is commonly accepting of intoxication as normal drinking practice.

Marketing also contributes to young people over-estimating the prevalence of heavy and frequent drinking among their peers. According to the advertisements: *Everybody's doing it and so should you* (American Medical Association).

Branding

"Product image", or the attaching of powerful emotional associations to the product, is probably the most important element in selling alcohol. A "personality" is created for a

brand and specific imagery chosen to target the intended market. Branding allows people to connect with the fantasies portrayed in the brand imagery, and acquire some of its image.

Affiliation to a particular brand can become very important in the lives of some heavy drinking sectors of society. Content analysis of alcohol advertisements on New Zealand television (Trotman et al. 1994), showed how imagery in alcohol advertising centres around such themes as mate-ship and belonging to a group, being a "real man", male competitiveness, partying, romance and sex, national pride, sports/fitness and changes in consciousness. Brand allegiance results in a highly competitive environment.

The trick for marketers is to project the right image in their advertisements, to motivate those often motionless consumers to march down to the bar or liquor store and exchange their money for a sip of image ("Advertising Age", industry magazine).

Extracts from DrinksBiz (2002) industry magazine*:*
The bottle is the hero. Trend-conscious fashionable professionals and the like are ordering ABSOLUT at premium bars. It reflects the image of how they see themselves.

We're focusing fairly strongly on recruitment to Jim Beam. We're aiming to make it relevant to the new age of drinkers coming through. We don't want them seeing Jim Beam as a drink for oldies or bikies.

Advertising presents a one-sided view

Alcohol advertising can also be seen as an influence that "informs" people (WHO, 1994). But it presents a misleading, one-sided view of alcohol use, presenting drinking as a purely positive activity and avoiding any reference to the negative aspects of alcohol consumption (Montonen, 1996).

The alcohol industry has been quick to pick up on and promote publicity about the possible benefits of alcohol to some people. This effect remains small, controversial and of little relevance to young people. Alcohol has been linked to 65 ICD (International Classification of Disease) categories, whereas there are four categories where benefits for **certain patterns** of drinking have been demonstrated (Rehm, 2003).

Advertising affects the social climate around alcohol policy

The acceptance of alcohol advertising, particularly on the powerful media of television, establishes a social climate of tolerance around alcohol. An effect of this is that other public policies, such as lowering the minimum purchase age, or a lowered blood alcohol concentration for driving, may be less likely to be accepted and implemented (WHO, 1994). Casswell et al. (1989) showed how communities exposed to educational moderation campaigns were more supportive of alcohol policies compared with those not exposed.

New Ways of Marketing Alcohol

> *Young people across the globe live in environments characterised by aggressive and ubiquitous efforts encouraging them to initiate drinking and to drink heavily. As well the substantial and influential presence of alcohol marketing in the traditional media outlets of television, radio, print and outdoor, there is a rising importance of musical, sports and cultural sponsorships, internet-based promotions and web-sites, product placements, youth-oriented new product development, on-premise and special event promotions, and other efforts to make alcoholic beverages a normal and integral part of young people's lives and cultures.* (Dr Marc Danzon, Regional Director of the WHO, 2001)

The WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Young People (Jernigan, 2001) estimates that, in 1993 in the US, around 75 percent of marketing expenditure was on these other promotions.

Sponsorship

Alcohol sponsorship has become common throughout the world in key areas of youth culture, sport, music, film and television. Increasingly, it is targeted to a particular market; for example the young, predominantly male audience at sports events. Advertisers can cash in on the prestige, fun or glamour of the event/programme/role model.

Sponsorship of programmes and televised events is a cost effective form of advertising which is less subject to channel switching and saturation issues of conventional television advertising. There are increasing ways for sponsors to maximise their on-air exposure for example: on replay keys and stump vision in cricket and sponsor credits, which become "part of the whole viewing experience" (TVNZ, 1999). The cumulative effect of sponsor credits repeated through a whole night is a powerful promotional tool, particularly since this exposure currently may occur outside the time restrictions on more direct advertising.

Alcohol sponsorship of sport reinforces an undesirable link between alcohol and sport. Sports have a large youthful audience and are a valuable investment for the alcohol industry in recruiting future drinkers. Sponsorship now involves naming rights, pourage rights, branding on clothing, sports grounds and products. In New Zealand, an unhealthy dependence of sports clubs, teams and events on financial support from breweries has been allowed to develop.

Another deeply concerning trend is the growing involvement of the alcohol industry in schools and tertiary education settings.

New Product Development and Marketing

The WHO (2001) draws attention to the alcohol industry's double standards, proclaiming their desire to prevent underage consumption and promote responsible drinking on the one hand, but simultaneously developing products that are likely to have the opposite effects on the other.

The alcopops, the fruit-flavoured drinks that disguise the taste of alcohol, are clearly targeted at those younger than 20. They are an example of the new, extra pressures that young people face nowadays (Gro Bruntland, Director WHO, 2001). The recent development of alcoholic milk products with names such as "Strawberry Mudslide"(13.9 percent alcohol) is a local example. Other examples of products with names (and prices) designed to appeal to young people in New Zealand are: "Mi5 — a gin lime and lemonade flavoured drink", "TATTOO — vodka and cranberry" and "H.E.M.P. vodka — Highly Enjoyable Magic Potion."

Romanus (2000), studied the impact of alcopops and sweet ciders on the Swedish youth market. The surveys suggest that alcopops accounted for between a half and two thirds of the recorded increase in alcohol consumption by 15 to 16 year olds from 1996 to 1999, and contributed to an earlier age of onset of drinking amongst the youngest age groups surveyed (12-13 year olds). In New Zealand the demand for spirits based drinks (less than 23 percent alcohol content) has risen dramatically since their introduction in 1995, with the volume of spirits based drinks available for consumption rising 9.3 percent in the last year (Statistics New Zealand, 2003).

Jackson et al (2000) studied two new products in the UK and demonstrated how they perfectly suited the needs of distinct age groups within the youth market, including underage drinkers. He showed how the alcohol industry has moved with changes in youth culture, introducing heavily branded products to meet the needs of fashion conscious young people.

Cooke et al. (2002) conclude that *research suggests that new product development by the alcohol industry is having an impact on young people's drinking and is associated with increased drunkenness and dangerous behaviour.*

The internet and other electronic marketing mechanisms

Young people in the developed world are the biggest users of the internet and the alcohol industry has not been slow to realise the marketing implications of this fact. The Centre for Media Education (1998) in the US analysed the content of alcohol sites on the internet. Of the 77 sites examined, 62 percent contained content which the researchers believed would be appealing to youth — often specifically aimed at youth culture (cartoons, personalities, music, contests, fashion shows, interactive games and chat rooms). Although most declare that the user must be of legal drinking age it is unlikely to be a serious deterrent (Cooke et al. 2002). Regulation will demand concerted international effort — some countries have begun by extending their liquor advertising codes to include internet advertising.

Other technology, such as the use of cell phones for viral marketing, present the alcohol industry with a whole new range of possibilities.

Section 2.

A CRITICAL LOOK AT SOME COMMON ARGUMENTS

Freedom of commercial speech and the legal right to advertise

The alcohol and advertising industries argue that, since alcoholic drink is a legal product, it should be legal for it to be advertised. Hill (2001) points out that rather than a legal product, alcohol is better described as a "regulated product" — one which is routinely restricted and licensed by law, including laws restricting advertising.

The right to advertise is protected by the general right to freedom of expression in section 14 of the NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990. There have been several legal opinions sought on this subject, with the 1998 ASA review team concluding that parliament would be able to over-ride the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act if it saw fit. In 1998, the Group Against Liquor Advertising sought the legal opinion of Grant Huscroft, University of Auckland Faculty of Law, on this issue. In his opinion, commercial expression has never enjoyed protection to the same degree as other forms of expression, especially when considering limitations on the ability to advertise a product which can cause substantial harm. Any Act of Parliament given sufficient reason can over-ride the Bill, as indeed several have.

There may also be other avenues for questioning the right to advertise a product with such well known health and safety risks. In view of the high level of alcohol-related harm experienced by Maori, the principle of protection in Article 3 of the Treaty of Waitangi may provide support for prohibiting or further restricting advertising. Similarly, in view of the disproportionate harm experienced by young people, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by New Zealand in 1993, Article 17, (e) states parties shall: "Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being."

Other influences on drinking, such as parental example, are more important

It is commonly heard that restricting advertising would divert attention from the "real issues of education and the role of the family" (Nicki Stewart, Chief Executive, Beer, Wine and Spirits Council, 2002). The alcohol industry reinforces this theme with a position least likely to restrict sales, that is: that environmental strategies do not work, the individual drinker or parent bears sole responsibility for any problems — it is simply a matter of learning responsible drinking habits.

In fact, we can expect no single measure to have a dramatic effect on drinking patterns in New Zealand and the evidence for major impact from any one measure is not strong (WHO, 1994). To burden parents alone with the role of countering the pressures on young people to drink is unfair and indeed simplistic, as is the belief that the provision of information alone is sufficient to motivate young people to alter risky practices. Interventions with the greatest evidence-base for effectiveness in reducing alcohol-related harm are environmental policy approaches (Holder, 2003). This approach often coincides with those policy changes most opposed by the alcohol industry (The Globe, 2002).

How can we expect kids to say no to alcohol and other drugs when their environment tells them yes? People make individual choices, but do so in a physical, social, economic and legal environment (Kilbourne, 2000).

An advertising ban is difficult to justify in view of declining per capita consumption

There are several problems with this argument:

Alcohol consumption is trending back up again. The total volume of alcoholic beverage available for consumption rose 0.8 percent in 2001 and 4.6 percent in the year ended December 2002 (Statistics New Zealand, 2002).

Declining overall consumption masks harmful drinking patterns, trends, and high levels of alcohol-related harm in some sectors of the population. Although total consumption has declined over the past decade, it rose worryingly in some groups, such as young people and women.

Tax changes, drink driving and other initiatives, an aging population and economic factors have influenced the overall decline in the past 15 years. A ban on advertising could have reduced it further.

Per capita consumption of beer, the most regularly advertised alcoholic beverage, has moderated every year since the first television beer advertisement in 1992 (Nicki Stewart, CE Beer, Wine and Spirits Council, 2002). Although the trend has been towards declining beer consumption, the volume of beer (beverage available for consumption) rose 1.8 percent to the year ended March 2003 (Statistics New Zealand, 2003). Intensive beer advertising may be needed to enlist new recruits and keep sales up in this market.

Free time for alcohol-related health promotion messages would be lost

In 1999 over $45 million was spent in New Zealand on broadcast alcohol advertising, whereas $3 million annually is contributed by broadcasters in free time for moderation messages about alcohol (IACD, 2000). This imbalance has helped to create a "hostile environment" for education, (Wallack, 1993) whereby such health promotion education becomes 'boring', promulgated by "health nazis", in contrast to the fun and glamour of drinking promotion.

Young people can deal critically with alcohol advertising

*To suggest that alcohol brand advertisements encourage young people to drink to excess is patronising. There is an increasing body of qualitative research which shows young people are able to judge for themselve*s (ALAC submission to ASA review 1998).

The World Health Organisation disagrees:
Media literacy, training young people to de-code and resist marketing messages, by itself is insufficient to address the emotional and non-logical appeal of the marketing (WHO Declaration, Valencia, 2000).

Many of us believe ourselves to be resistant to the messages of advertising. Although alerting young people to basic tactics used in advertising may be helpful, a large body of research demonstrates the subtlety of advertising in influencing young people's associations and attitudes to alcohol *(see Section 1)*.

Banning alcohol advertising is inconsistent with a move away from the "nanny state"

It was argued in the 1998 ASA review that there is a drive towards greater individual and social responsibility that would render increased advertising restrictions in some way over-protective or "insulting to the intelligence of the public" (ALAC, 1998). It is not viewed this way in countries where broadcast alcohol advertising is banned or severely restricted. In fact, although struggling against powerful lobbying from the alcohol industry, the trend is towards stricter rather than more lenient controls in both regulatory and self-regulatory systems (Montonen, 1996).

Public support for the liberalisation of regulations concerning alcohol in New Zealand, evident over the past decade, is no longer necessarily the case. Along with increasing concern that liberalisation has worsened the situation, we are seeing reactive and haphazard legislation as the government, both national and local, scrambles to address youth drinking issues. The establishment of a Ministerial Action Group to address youth drinking and increasing use of liquor bans in public places are examples.

Increasing access to international television and the internet

It is sometimes implied that it is futile to have further national controls on alcohol advertising when there are an increasing number of live broadcasts of advertisements from other countries. Additionally, young people have increasing access to the internet, where alcohol advertisers are using increasingly sophisticated techniques to market alcohol to youth.

The existence of such sites erodes even the theoretical ability to impose a total ban on broadcast alcohol advertising (ALAC, 1998). This is not a justification for allowing emerging forms of alcohol promotion in New Zealand to go unchecked. Internet advertising is a worrying trend given the attractiveness of this media for young people and the difficulty of its regulation. *Future concerted international effort will be required to halt the increasing flood of advertising on the internet, many of which are unashamedly aimed at young peopl*e (WHO, 2001). Internationalisation of the media demands action at international, national and local level.

Alcohol money is an important income for sports teams and worthwhile community activities.

This is a vexing issue, as an unhealthy allegiance and dependence has already been created. The New Zealand Rugby Football Union, for example, is concerned that the viability of many of its clubs could be in jeopardy if liquor company sponsorship of rugby is restricted. Disturbingly, Sport and Recreation New Zealand, in their submission to the 2003 ASA Liquor Advertising Review, found a need to *balance public health considerations against the viability of a sector which also makes significant contributions to the health and welfare of New Zealanders.* They expressed concern that the review could potentially impact on sponsorship revenue, when other funding streams are declining.

Long-term sponsorships of teams and clubs creates a sense of brand loyalty among a captive audience. At the community level, local sports clubs are often where young New Zealanders

learn about drinking. This is reinforced at a professional level and promoted through match broadcasts.

A healthier approach to sports sponsorship would involve a gradual phasing out of alcohol involvement in sport and a search for new partners.

The alcohol industry, in the interests of promoting a better image, frequently supports community groups and enters into collaboration with health groups. It is worth remembering that, as with other businesses, the alcohol industry's primary focus is on maximising profits. Its marketing budgets dwarf expenditure on supporting educational and community activities. In 1998 there was approximately $52 million worth of product and sponsorship advertising on television, radio, magazines and press (AC Neilson, 1999). Estimates of the annual cost of alcohol-related harm to New Zealand society vary from $1.4 – 4 billion (Devlin et al 1996) and, taking into account intangible costs, up to as much as $16 billion (Easton, 1997).

Banning advertising would inhibit the development of mature attitudes to drinking

The 1998 Advertising Standards review team concluded that *a ban may inhibit the momentum of a more mature drinking attitude.* Similarly, Graham Seatter, Lion Breweries Sponsorship Director has said that *a mature society accepts alcoholic beverages as a normal part of everyday life* (Oct. 2002).

Restrictions on the promotion of alcohol should be designed to protect vulnerable members of society, including teenagers, who cannot be expected to have "mature drinking attitudes". Arguably, a "mature" society does not promote and glamorise products that are injurious to health, but, as with other hazards, accepts a level of restrictions that protects vulnerable members. As the ban on tobacco advertising has helped to change the normality of tobacco use in many sectors of society, an alcohol advertising ban would assist with changing the culture around alcohol use in New Zealand. In particular, it would encourage much needed change in the macho drinking culture, which approves of intoxication and makes up the hard core of heavy drinkers and, increasingly, the youth drinking culture.

"Forbidden Fruit"

A related argument is that *to ban alcohol advertising and sports sponsorship would create a situation where alcoholic beverages are seen by young people as forbidden fruit* (Graham Seatter, Lion Breweries Sponsorship Director, Oct 2002).

There is no evidence that young people will be more likely to drink responsibly if they consume alcohol from a younger age. Rather, there is both national and international evidence to the contrary. It is well established that early onset of regular drinking is linked to increased alcohol-related problems in adolescence and at later ages (Casswell and Zhang, 1998), (Hingson et al. 2000), (Pedersen, 1998), (Yu et al. 1993).

France is frequently cited as a society where alcohol use is a normal part of growing up. The French drink 54 percent more alcohol than Americans (WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol) and have the highest rate of premature male death in Europe, attributed to alcohol. In 1991 the "Loi Evin" legislation banned broadcast alcohol advertising and sponsorship of sports.

"The public are not overly concerned about the issue of alcohol advertising"

Broadcaster research is frequently used to indicate that many people have neutral attitudes towards alcohol advertising. They conclude that there is general satisfaction with the current rules (NZTBC, 2003). Such surveys are dependent on the questions asked.

A public opinion survey in 1994 (Maskill et al.), showed that 63 percent of people surveyed saw no positive influence from alcohol advertisements on radio and television and 71 percent believed they had negative influences on young people, such as encouraging them to drink or giving them inappropriate messages about alcohol. A NZTBC commissioned survey to measure public opinion about alcohol advertising (Colmar Brunton, 2002) found that, while many people were not aware of alcohol advertising or made positive comments about it, 13 percent of respondents felt the rules concerning alcohol advertising are too lenient, while only one percent thought the rules are too strict.

The number of complaints about alcohol advertisements to the ASA has declined in recent years – from 75 in 1992 to 19 in 2002. This decline has been taken in previous reviews as evidence that the public are happy with the status quo, and to indicate a successful pre-vetting system.

If there is little vocal outcry from society about alcohol advertisements, one reason is likely to be because there is little public awareness of the codes. The Colmar Brunton survey mentioned above found that nearly half of respondents were unaware of rules relating to liquor advertising, and this awareness has dropped over recent years.

It could also indicate frustration with the complex and lengthy complaints procedure. Another reason is the insidious nature of advertising. Alcohol advertisements are frequently well-designed, extravagantly produced and humorous, masking the subtlety of their effect. As we are all constantly immersed in advertising, it has in effect become "normalised," and awareness of its power to influence our social norms is not likely to be high.

Section 3.

POLICY OPTIONS

A Discontinuation of Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship

This policy would be the most consistent with national strategies and legislative aims of reducing alcohol-related harm.

Banning alcohol advertising is a highly visible and symbolic strategy (WHO, 1994). While its effectiveness will be difficult to measure in the short term, this intervention would have potential to significantly influence the social norms around alcohol use in New Zealand. As a signal of societal intolerance, a ban on alcohol advertising would also be effective in fostering an environment that increases the likelihood that other public health policies around alcohol will be accepted and implemented (WHO, 1994).

Since partial bans result in other marketing practices take on greater importance (Deeks, 1992), discontinuation of alcohol advertising must be in as many forms of media as possible. Saffer (2002) also concludes that, since a partial ban is likely to result in substitution to other available media, to be effective a ban must ideally cover all forms of promotion.

A Change in the Jurisdiction of Alcohol Advertising

Self regulation is inherently unlikely to work. The industry has blatantly, consistently, and extensively broken its own codes in all areas of the world, with no evidence that this has improved over the years (Editorial *The Globe*, 2002).

Self-regulation is inadequate

Alcohol Healthwatch, along with other concerned groups, questions whether the Advertising Standards Authority can have sufficient objectivity and awareness of the public health implications of alcohol advertising to be charged with the authority of its management. Some of their concerns are as follows:

- The codes do not arise out of public health policy, but are based on an industry view of what is acceptable.
- The codes are subject to considerable interpretation, and are inherently unable to deal with the subtleties of advertising techniques.
- The pre-vetting system is not restrictive enough to prevent many alcohol advertisers pushing the boundaries of the code. The system is therefore largely complaints dependent.
- The public are largely unaware of the code and how to make a complaint.
- The codes are focused on content, and media other than television have no restriction on saturation. Level of exposure may be an equally important factor in creating norms relating to our drinking culture.
- In a self-regulatory system there are no sanctions other than removal of the advertisement.

- Most modern advertising uses a technique called "pulsing" whereby short bursts of advertising in a specific market are followed by no advertising, so campaigns are likely to be over by the time a complaint has been upheld and an advertisement removed.
- The adjudication panels are insufficiently independent of the advertising and media bodies, and lack representation from people with public health expertise.
- The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) review process does not allow for a full and independent investigation into the impacts of advertising. The terms of reference given are too restrictive to allow a proper inquiry, and the review team is under-represented by persons with a background in the health sector.

Gray (1996) interviewed key informants about the changes resulting from the 1995 Liquor Code and BSA standards review and found health and consumer groups dissatisfied with the ASA complaints procedure — *interpretations are too narrow and closely aligned with the industry perspective, legalistic, and complaints take too long to be decided.*

The 2003 ASA Review on Liquor Advertising

The outcomes of the 2003 ASA Review on Liquor Advertising once again highlight the concerns shared by many public health organisations about the review process.

The "independent" review was conducted by a panel of seven, three of whom were appointed by the ASA, and only one of whom – director of public health Dr Colin Tukuitonga – has a background in the health sector.

Instead of focusing on the importance of the environment in determining behaviour and assessing the role of alcohol advertising in creating unhealthy social norms, the ASA review again looked for evidence that advertising increases the risk of alcohol abuse, demanding a level of proof that is almost impossible to supply.

The terms of reference for the review restricted the panel to looking at any "new evidence" since the previous review, thus assuming that the previous outcomes were correct. They focused again on the relationship between alcohol advertising and population consumption trends – an approach which is inherently flawed (*see page 9*).

Among other concerns, a major outcome of the review was to allow alcohol advertising on television half an hour earlier. The efforts made to strengthen the code, such as the introduction of a vague Principle of Social Responsibility, are insufficient to mitigate the liberalised watershed.

Rather than drawing on the growing body of evidence that advertising is at least reinforcing drinking in the young in reaching its conclusion, the review panel, as in the previous two reviews, lamented a *lack of up to date research in the whole area – particularly the effect of advertising on youth drinking.*

Australian review pending

The 2003 ASA review questioned whether the liquor codes should be merged with those of Australia. The Australian code is less comprehensive than our own and widely acknowledged to be ineffective: "*The current system is inadequate and requires urgent re-*

examination." (John Thwaites, Victorian Health Minister, July 2002) The Australian Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy has requested that the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs review the effectiveness of the current self-regulatory system for alcohol advertising with particular attention to: *the capacity of the industry to self regulate; the effectiveness of the complaints mechanisms; opportunistic marketing of alcohol to under 18 year-olds and the degree to which internet advertising of alcohol complies with requirements of the Code*.

An Australian study by Jones and Donovan in 2000 sought to test the effectiveness of the self-regulation system by determining young people's perception of messages contained in advertisements. Three pre-vetted radio advertisements for a vodka pre-mix drink were selected. Results showed that the young people perceived the messages in the advertisements to include: that consumption of alcohol can lead to a significant change of mood, contribute to sexual success and have a therapeutic benefit. The advertisements were perceived by a substantial proportion of the sample as targeting youth under 18 years. The authors suggest that the advertisements may be outside the industry guidelines and that the self regulation system is not functioning effectively.

Alcohol Healthwatch believes any pressure to merge with an even weaker Australian code, would make the process of change more difficult. This must be approached with greatest caution, and, along with other alcohol marketing policy, be determined at government level.

Independence from industry essential

The agency in control of alcohol advertising would ideally have sufficient independence from the advertising industry to enable objectivity, have a keen awareness of public health issues and the ability to sanction any advertisers which clearly breach the code. The European Advertising Standards Alliance also recommends that the body responsible for the application of the code should be independent of the body responsible for its establishment and review (EASA, 1999).

Many countries oversee alcohol advertising using statutory legislation or a combination of statutory and industry self-regulation.

A co-ordinated approach to alcohol promotion is needed

In New Zealand, codes governing the promotion of liquor are currently shared between the ASA, the BSA and until recently ALAC's naming, packaging and merchandising guidelines. Additionally, the Food Safety Australia and New Zealand body (FSANZ) controls the labelling of products and would also have control over health and safety labelling. This fragmentation makes a co-ordinated approach to alcohol promotion difficult.

One option would be to have a single, statutory body responsible for monitoring and control of the promotion to society of alcoholic beverages. The oversight of all aspects of sponsorship, merchandising, broadcast, print as well as new media advertising by a single body would enable greater consistency, coordination, and stricter application of regulations.

Another would be to return the jurisdiction of alcohol advertising to the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA). This would better serve the public interest by enabling greater objectivity and sanctions. Since the BSA already has oversight of some aspects of alcohol advertising such as saturation and incidental alcohol advertising issues, to take on another responsibility in this area would be consistent with its current role.

If advertising jurisdiction is to remain with the ASA, Alcohol Healthwatch strongly recommends that the drafting of codes, pre-vetting of advertisements, adjudication of complaints, and future reviews be undertaken by an independent panel which has a majority of public health representatives.

Stricter Interpretation of the Current Advertising Standards Authority Codes

The current codes provide no firm boundaries, but are subject to considerable interpretation, containing such vague guidelines as: " advertisements shall not have depictions that unduly glamorise liquor or associations with it" or "advertisements shall not portray masculine images in an overly dramatic manner" or "shall not direct advertising to minors nor have evident appeal to minors in particular". The codes are often interpreted in a narrow way and many alcohol advertisements push these boundaries. They indeed violate the spirit of the codes which are based on the principle that advertising should be "truthful and prepared with a sense of social responsibility to the consumer"(Advertising Standards Authority, 2002).

Although codes restrict the worst of advertising, as Hill and Casswell point out, they are largely irrelevant to the way in which alcohol advertising and promotion works. More precise and explicit definitions and examples are needed. However, Alcohol Healthwatch believes that tightening the code is unlikely to influence the impact of alcohol advertising since the creativity and subtlety used is unable to be restricted by these means. There is no need to show underage drinkers to appeal to the young, for example, but simply show the lifestyles that young adults aspire to (Hill and Casswell, 2001).

Turn-around period: According to the ASCB there is a maximum six-week turn-around period for the complaints procedure. This is ample time for the public to be widely exposed to the advertisement. By the time the complaints procedure, and sometimes the appeal procedure is undertaken, the advertisement has largely done its work. For example, in the case of Alcohol Healthwatch's complaint about DB Export's "Summer's Here" campaign in 2001, the time lapse was 8 months from initial lodging of the complaint to an appeal resulting in successful removal of the advertisement.

Increasing Public Awareness of the Code and Complaints Procedure

Monitoring by the public is dependent on public knowledge. A poll conducted for NZTBC (Colmar Brunton, 2002), indicated that awareness of most rules relating to alcohol advertising was around two to three percent, with the most commonly known rule being that ads were allowed only at certain times (17 percent). The public needs to be educated about the alcohol advertising codes and complaints process, particularly by way of television messages. Another reason the number of complaints is small may be simply because the public have not the time or energy to go through the process. A simpler internet or phone-based system would enable the public and interested organisations to register their dissatisfaction with an advertisement, and enable the regulatory body to gain more feedback that could help guide decision-making.

Alcohol Healthwatch believes, however, that a system that is largely complaints dependent serves the industry better than the public. In a society saturated with advertising, offensive or inappropriate content becomes "normalised" and awareness of its impact is low.

Mandatory Health Messages

In the Netherlands, 40 percent of alcohol advertisements are required to carry a moderation message. Although it has been suggested that this is unworkable in a 30 second advertisement, this is contestable. A pull across message or, more powerfully, a spoken message, would ideally focus on a rotating range of specific messages, such as the dangers of alcohol-related birth defects, alcohol-related crime and violence, general health risks, injury risk and unplanned pregnancies. These messages would assist to balance the positive messages of the advertisements and remind the public of the risks associated with alcohol. The requirement in itself could serve to put advertisers off, without restricting the right to advertise.

Restriction of Content

The most common form of alcohol advertising is "lifestyle" advertising, where the content of the advertisement focuses on the desirability of using alcoholic drinks, rather than on the product itself. These advertisements portray a generally positive picture of the effect of using alcohol, and associate alcohol use with popular activities, or a fashionable lifestyle. In doing so, they are powerful creators and maintainers of social norms, especially in young people.

In Switzerland, alcohol advertising in print, television or radio must be restricted to factual information and descriptions which are directly relevant to the product and its attributes. The representation of a life style, for example: landscapes which have no direct connection with liquor, people drinking spirits or talking in a bar are not allowable, nor slogans leading to associations that have nothing to do with the information on the product.

Stricter Regulations for the Naming and Packaging of Alcoholic Products

ALAC, in consultation with producers, suppliers and retailers, has developed National Guidelines for the Naming, Packaging and Merchandising of Alcoholic Beverages (2000). The guidelines have been voluntarily supported by signatories which include the major New Zealand producers, retailers and hospitality bodies. Like the ASA liquor code, the guidelines are subject to the vagaries of interpretation and boundaries are frequently pushed or not adhered to in spirit. Recent emergence of the products mentioned on page 14 are examples.

Alcohol Healthwatch commends the 2003 ASA review panel's recommendation to include the Naming, Packaging and Merchandising Guidelines in the liquor advertising code. However, placing such guidelines under the jurisdiction of a statutory body, with closer monitoring and the ability to sanction breaches, would give better control over the development packaging and importation of products.

Removing Tax Deductibility of Advertising

The ability to claim advertising as a tax deductible business expense in effect subsides the promotion of a product with high social and economic costs to society. At least, this tax deductibility should be removed, at best, a tax could be placed on all alcohol advertising and the revenue used to finance alcohol health promotion activities.

The option of removing tax deductibility has attracted considerable support in the United States.

Increasing the Number of Counter Advertisements

The ratio of alcohol to alcohol health-promotion advertisements is approximately 10:1 (APHRU, 1998). Health promotion messages must compete with sophisticated and hugely better resourced alcohol marketing. Increasing moderation messages to begin to redress this imbalance would be costly. It may also promote more aggressive advertising.

According to Saffer (2002), however, there is an increasing body of literature that suggests that alcohol counter-advertising is effective in reducing the alcohol consumption of teenagers and young adults. It would be important that counter advertising is well targeted and themes that are most effective with youth are well researched.

Increased Restrictions on Placement of Advertisements

Advertisements for liquor have infiltrated many areas of our daily lives. Prohibiting alcohol sponsorship at sporting events, concerts, bus shelters, and other areas where young people congregate would limit exposure to alcohol advertising.

Alcohol sponsorship could be phased out to allow sports groups/event organisers to find alternative sponsors. Some councils in New Zealand have policies that do not allow alcohol advertising on council owned properties. These types of initiatives need to be supported and promoted more widely.

Tighter Restriction on Exposure to Advertisements

Aside from the television watershed and saturation limitations, restrictions on alcohol advertising focus on content of advertisements rather than on control of population exposure. Given the ubiquity of alcohol advertising in an increasing range of media, level of exposure may be an equally important factor in creating norms relating to our drinking culture. There is a need for monitoring where and how exposure to alcohol advertisements is occurring, including the increasing number of incidental promotions and give-aways which are relatively uncontrolled. Alcohol advertising on radio, which often has a large youth audience, currently has no time restrictions.

Young people are already over-exposed to alcohol advertising. Wyllie (1996), found that children aged 5-14 years were exposed to 300 alcohol advertisements on television during 1996. Many young children regularly watch television to later hours, particularly during weekends and school holidays. Television viewing figures show that approximately a quarter of 10-18 year-olds in New Zealand are viewing between 6pm and 9.30 pm, while from 9.30 pm this figure drops to 19 percent (Nielsen Media Research, 2002).

The “slight shift in watershed” for alcohol advertisements on television from 9pm to 8.30pm recommended by the 2003 ASA review panel has added thousands of young viewers to the audience for alcohol advertisements.

Policies of Other Countries

New Zealand's policy on alcohol advertising is currently at the less restrictive end of the spectrum in comparison with similar countries. A small number of countries ban all alcohol advertising on television and radio, some just on state owned channels, some just for higher alcohol content beverages. Others restrict lifestyle advertisements or require health messages. Some countries have a mixed regulatory system involving requirements by law as well as industry regulation. In Europe, the pressure to conform to uniform trade regulations has restricted the ability of some countries to enact their more comprehensive bans (such as the example of Sweden given below).

Examples of Alcohol Advertising Policies in Comparable Countries:

France – France's controversial "Loi Evin" was introduced in 1991. It bans television advertising of any drink with an alcohol content of more than 1.2 percent, no alcohol sports sponsorship and restrictions on radio advertising. In 2001 France bowed to pressure from the European commission and industry and agreed to relax the law to exempt international sporting competitions.

Denmark – television and radio advertisements are not permitted for alcohol over 2.25 percent alcohol content. Other media must not aim advertising at minors.

Sweden – bans marketing on radio or television, except for low alcohol beer. A 25 year old ban of alcohol advertising in print media ended this year when the Swedish Market Court ruled that it violated European Union Legislation (The Globe, 2003).

Norway – a policy allowing no alcohol advertising, including advertising for goods and services, has also recently come under attack from the European commission. Visiting sports teams must comply with limited advertising; for example on clothing. Promotes sports and sports clubs as "alcohol-free zones" where children are protected from alcohol marketing.

Switzerland – allows no lifestyle advertising

Belgium – allows no advertising on state television, or radio, no spirits advertising on commercial channels, and no alcohol advertising on radio

Austria and Ireland, Spain and Finland ban broadcast advertising of higher alcohol products.

France, Spain and Portugal have during the last decade banned alcohol advertisement in the sports arenas.

USA – attempts to include health warnings on advertisements and to remove the tax deductibility have been unsuccessful.

Britain – broadcast advertising is the responsibility of statutory bodies; other media comes under a voluntary code, which limits advertising where more than a quarter of the audience is likely to be under 18.

Netherlands – the Code for Alcohol Beverages covers all forms of advertising including packaging, internets, point of sale material and sponsorship. The code requires 40 percent of alcohol advertising on television to have moderation or warning messages.

Ireland – In response to a surge in alcohol consumption, the government has recently planned legislation to ban advertisements for alcohol on television and radio before 10pm, alcohol advertising on public transport, in youth centres and sports events where underage people are present. It also plans to ban "happy hours" and has recommended health warnings on alcoholic drinks.

Section 4.

ALCOHOL HEALTHWATCH'S POSITION ON ALCOHOL ADVERTISING

A review of government policy on alcohol advertising

The advertising of alcoholic beverages is an important public health issue and should be assessed in the context of government aims of reducing alcohol-related harm as stated, for example, in the National Alcohol Strategy 2000 and in the object of the Sale of Liquor Act 1989. Alcohol Healthwatch calls for an independent review of government policy on alcohol advertising and recommends that, rather than looking for concrete proof that alcohol advertising causes **alcohol abuse**, such a review should include:

- What role advertising plays in the social climate around alcohol use in New Zealand.
- The impact of alcohol advertising on the most vulnerable sectors of New Zealand society.
- In view of its role in creating and maintaining social norms, should alcohol advertising be permitted in New Zealand?
- If we are to allow alcohol advertising, how are we going to minimise its role in validating an unhealthy drinking culture in New Zealand?

Discontinuation of Alcohol Advertising

Alcohol Healthwatch advocates, as a preferred policy option, a discontinuation of alcohol advertising in New Zealand controlled media and a phasing out of alcohol industry sponsorship.

Alcohol Healthwatch endorses the actions of countries where some level of a ban on alcohol advertising is in place, and believes New Zealand could be a leader in this part of the world by doing likewise.

Statutory regulation

Failing a broad discontinuation of alcohol advertising, Alcohol Healthwatch strongly recommends that the self-regulatory system be replaced by a statutory body overseeing all forms of alcohol promotion. This body must have the ability to sanction any advertisers who clearly breach the code. If alcohol advertising jurisdiction is to remain with the ASA, the drafting of codes, adjudication of complaints, and future reviews must be undertaken by an independent panel which has a majority of representatives with a background in public health.

Increased restrictions on all forms of alcohol marketing

This is an essential part of changing the drinking culture in New Zealand. Alcohol Healthwatch recommends a strategy to restrict alcohol advertising including a mix of most of the following options:

- Further restriction of content of advertisements, especially "lifestyle advertising".
- Increasing public awareness of liquor advertising codes and complaints procedures.

- Mandatory health messages on alcohol advertisements.
- Removing the tax deductibility of alcohol advertising.
- Increased counter advertising.
- Increased restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertisements.
- Tighter restrictions on new product development and new forms of marketing.

Improved monitoring
Such a strategy must be accompanied by ongoing monitoring of exposure to alcohol advertising by target groups in all media.

Increased restrictions on advertising must be part of wider change in alcohol-related legislation.
Restrictions on advertising will achieve most as part of a collective strategy to create a legislative environment that is more supportive of reducing alcohol-related harm.

Policy Statement

Alcohol Healthwatch advocates, as a preferred policy option, a discontinuation of alcohol advertising in New Zealand controlled media and a phasing out of alcohol industry sponsorship.

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