



**A L C O H O L  
H E A L T H W A T C H**

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**A mixed bag! That's the verdict of Alcohol Healthwatch on the release of the Terms of Reference for the Review of the Sale and Supply of Liquor to Minors.**

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says that while the Review provides for a process towards action it further delays decision-making and action.

Williams says the goals of the Review are troubling given that they really don't move us forward. We already know the harms arising from the sale and supply to minors and we already know what is effective to address these harms. It is the lack of decision-making and action on this information that has hampered progress toward reducing alcohol-related harm.

One of the goals is to "develop policy proposals" yet Williams points out that the New Zealand Drug Policy expired in 2003 and despite a discussion document and consultation in April last year has not been updated. The New Zealand Alcohol Strategy also expired in 2003. Hence this Review feels like it's starting yet another adhoc process when many others have already failed to achieve decisions, actions and the necessary resources to make them happen.

Williams says that surely it's time to commit to a 'whole of Government' evidence-based approach to addressing alcohol-related harm, monitor its effectiveness and stop picking issues off one at a time.

We need to do what works. Williams points to taxation/pricing strategies, restricting marketing and better management of outlet density and hours of operation of licensed premises as just some of the options for being more effective. What works and what is promising is clearly identified in research. Sooner or later we will need to do the hard yards – why not start now?

While it is important that the review has a focus on young people Williams says young people should not carry the can for years of decision-making that has created an environment that encourages and accepts wide spread hazardous drinking. It is an environment that has been created by adults and commercial interests have been strongly influential in this.

70% of New Zealanders supported the call for the purchase age of alcohol to return to 20 years last year. That is a very clear message that the community want something done and that they were prepared to pay the price.

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Action on Liquor Campaign information and a range of briefing papers on topics including sale of liquor, taxation, advertising and marketing can be found at [www.ahw.co.nz](http://www.ahw.co.nz)