



## INFORMATION SHEET: SALE AND SUPPLY OF LIQUOR

### Background

- Following the last major review of alcohol laws the current Sale of Liquor Act (1989) was established.
- This act greatly liberalised the sale and supply of liquor in New Zealand.
- Community input into local licensing decisions was limited. No longer did license applications need to meet the criteria of being 'necessary or desirable'.
- The Act permitted the sales of wine and mead in supermarkets and other 'grocery' type outlets, and relaxed opening hours.
- Amendments to the Act in 1999 allowed Sunday trading, the sale of beer in supermarkets/grocery outlets and lowered the minimum purchase age from 20 to 18 years.
- An exemption in the Act allows supply to minors 'at a private social function'.
- The law changes have increased access and availability to alcohol. Increased competition has led to relatively low prices and heavy discounting.
- As part of this liberalisation, the Broadcasting Act (1989) permitted alcohol brand advertising in 1992. Prior to this, only sponsorship advertising was permitted.

### Current situation

- The number of liquor outlets has more than doubled since 1989. There are now over 14,000 liquor outlets in New Zealand. Many communities have raised concerns about the number, density and location of these premises.
- New Zealand research confirms that overall the consumption of alcohol is rising, and that those who do drink are drinking more hazardously.
- Drinking by young people is of particular concern. A large survey of secondary school students found that 61% of students are drinking and 34% are binge drinking.<sup>i</sup>
- Young people experience high rates of alcohol-related harms<sup>ii</sup>. These include injury and death from drink driving<sup>iii</sup>,<sup>iv</sup> violence<sup>v</sup>, high risk sexual activity, increased risk of suicide, substance abuse, and decreased work/study performance. Early exposure to alcohol is related to a range of poor adult outcomes.<sup>vi</sup>
- Research has linked the lowering of the drinking age with increased alcohol-related harms.<sup>iv</sup>
- Despite legal requirements sales to minors, intoxication in and around licensed premises and irresponsible promotions are still common.

## **Key Themes from the Law Commission report – Alcohol in our Lives**

- The Law Commission has found that 'liquor has become a source of serious social problems in New Zealand' and favours the writing of new alcohol law to regulate the sale and supply of liquor rather than further amendments to the current Act.
- They present a range of options in relation to the sale and supply of alcohol including: changes to the roles of both national Liquor Licensing Authority and District Licensing Agencies; other liquor licensing matters such as license types and criteria; minimum purchase age; supply to minors; opening hours; promotions; enforcement and penalty provisions; product restrictions and labelling and serving sizes.
- They also present a range of options in relation to price; advertising; drinking in public places; drink driving and treatment.

*For a full list of the Law Commission's options and the Alcohol Healthwatch response please refer to our Law Commission Tool-kit at [www.ahw.org.nz](http://www.ahw.org.nz).*

### **An evidence-based response**

- Create a new law for the sale and supply of alcohol that aims to protect and promote the well-being of New Zealand people and communities, and includes the following provisions:
  - Raise the minimum purchase age to 20 years from all types of premises.
  - Ensure that parents or guardians are the only legal suppliers of alcohol to a person under legal purchase age (20 years); and that consumption of liquor supplied by parent/guardian is supervised.
  - Require mandatory age verification of purchaser.
  - Reduce the number of liquor outlets and limit outlet density and location.
  - Reduce the opening hours and introduce national standards.
  - Increase the requirements of liquor licenses to reduce harm and bear associated costs.
  - Enable full and proper community consultation into licensing decisions.
  - Confine off-licence sales to dedicated liquor stores only.
  - Provide for minimum standards of training for all management, serving and security staff of licensed outlets.

### **What else is needed**

Other effective strategies to reduce alcohol related harms include:

- Ban all alcohol advertising and sponsorship.
- Increase the price of alcohol through increased taxation and introduce a minimum price.
- Lower the Blood Alcohol Concentration to at least 50mg/100ml and zero for all those under 20 years and on restricted licenses.
- Increase and improve access and availability to appropriate treatment and rehabilitation options.
- Provide for a range of brief and early intervention options across health, education, justice and other sectors.

- Require clear and bold health warnings on alcohol containers, at point of sale and to accompany any permitted liquor advertising.

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> Adolescent Health Research Group. 2008. *Youth '07: The health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand: Initial Findings*. University of Auckland.
- <sup>ii</sup> Ministry of Health. 2007. *Alcohol use in New Zealand. Analysis of the 2004 New Zealand Health Behaviours Survey – Alcohol Use*. Public Health Intelligence Occasional Bulletin No. 40.
- <sup>iii</sup> Huckle T, Pledger M, Casswell, S. 2006. *Trends in alcohol-related harms and offences in a liberalised alcohol environment*. *Addiction*, 101, 232-240.
- <sup>iv</sup> Kypri K, Voas RB, Langley J, Shaun CR, Stephenson DJ, Begg A, Scott Tippetts MS, Davie Gs, 2006. *Traffic crash injuries among 15- to 19-year-olds and minimum purchase age for alcohol in New Zealand*. *American Journal Public Health*, 96,126-131
- <sup>v</sup> Lee KH & Snape L. 2008. *Role of alcohol in maxillofacial fractures*. *NZMJ* 121:15-23
- <sup>vi</sup> Odgers C, Caspi A, Nagin DS, Piqueor AR, Slutske WS, Milne BJ, Dickson N, Oulton R, Moffitt T. (2008) *Is it important to prevent exposure to drugs and alcohol among adolescents?* *Psychological Science* 19:1037-1044.

## For further information

See other Alcohol Healthwatch information sheets and comprehensive policy briefing papers at <http://www.ahw.org.nz>

To speak with a Health Promotion Advisor for assistance with your submission please call (09) 520 7036