



Submission on
Manukau City Council Liquor Control
(Liquor Bans in Public Places)

Alcohol Healthwatch welcomes the opportunity to make a written submission on this the proposed changes to Liquor Controls in Manukau City.

We would also appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Committee to submit orally.

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Introduction

Alcohol Healthwatch is an independent charitable trust that works to reduce alcohol-related harm. We are contracted by the Ministry of Health to provide a range of services regionally and nationally, which includes provision of research-based information on policy and practice, and co-ordination and public health expertise for inter-agency and community groups who work on alcohol issues.

We have 20 years experience in alcohol health promotion and community action on alcohol. This includes 15 years as co-ordinators of the Last Drink Survey and associated Liquor Liaison Groups (statutory agency networks) in the Auckland region. We organise forums, meetings and symposia on alcohol issues to strengthen knowledge and understanding and support strategic responses to the harms associated with alcohol use. We provide information and raise awareness through our newsletter, email networks and our media advocacy. We co-ordinate a variety of community and issue-based projects and groups. We also provide evidence-based information to inform alcohol policy at a national level.

We have specific knowledge and expertise in the areas of alcohol policy and planning, the sale, supply and promotion of liquor, and community issues and responsiveness in relation to these. We take a special interest in Maori health/Whanau ora, injury and violence prevention, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and Tertiary Student drinking. We have extensive networks in Auckland and in the rest of the country on these issues and draw on these to inform our advice and action.

Our approach recognises that those strategies with the best evidence base for effectiveness in reducing alcohol-related problems are those that focus on changing the environment in which decisions are made, rather than educating the individual to make behaviour change. We view educative strategies as important, especially in support of more effective strategies.

Comments on the Proposed Bylaw Changes

We understand the following is proposed: extend the existing liquor controls to 24 hours and 7 days, clarify coverage of existing beach and other liquor controls areas, extend the area covered by some existing liquor controls and add new liquor controls in areas identified by the Counties Manukau Police.

Alcohol Healthwatch supports the proposed changes to Manukau City Council Liquor Controls as we believe they would serve to reduce alcohol-related harm in Manukau communities.

Extending the Ban to the proposed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week will allow the Police to better avert potential trouble that may arise from drinking in public places at any time of the day. In addition, the rule that no drinking at any time is allowed in these areas, is a much clearer and succinct rule for the public to understand and abide by.

We are particularly concerned about the drinking of alcohol and resulting problems in playground areas. We wish to be assured that these are in fact covered by the proposals.

Alcohol Healthwatch supports controls through such measures. However, alcohol bans are but one of a range of strategies to reduce alcohol-related harm, and are not effective in this objective on their own (Homel et al., 1995). International research (in Great Britain and Australia) has found that alcohol bans are more effective when they are part of a multi-component approach to reducing alcohol-related violence and public disorder (Ramsay 1990 in Scottish Executive Social Research, 2003; Homel et al., 1995).

In New Zealand, the effectiveness of alcohol bans has been linked to the level of police enforcement of these bans in Wellington City (Sim et al., 2005) and Havelock North (Hart, 2004). Evaluations of alcohol bans in Auckland City CBD (Greenaway and Conway, 2002), Christchurch (Bijoux, 2005), and at Piha beach, Auckland (Conway, 2002) have shown an increase in public perceptions of safety. The Auckland CBD and Piha bans also brought a significant decrease in alcohol-related disorder, local crime and fire service call-outs to vehicle incidents (Conway, 2002).

Extensive research has found that community partnerships involving police, local authorities, health agencies, community representatives and liquor liaison groups are seen to enhance the effectiveness of liquor bans harm (Bijoux, 2005, Alcohol Advisory Council, 2002, Alcohol Advisory Council, 2005a, Bennett et al., 2003, Greenaway et al., 2002, Conway, 2002, Webb et al., 2004, Homel et al., 1995). Such partnerships improve communication and information-sharing and benefit policing (Webb et al., 2004).

However, without other effective strategies in place to reduce the accessibility and availability of alcohol liquor bans can serve to simply shift the problem somewhere else.

Recommendations

Alcohol Healthwatch recommends that Manukau City Council adopt all proposed changes to the Liquor Ban Bylaw.

Alcohol Healthwatch further recommends that this positive change to the bylaw be supported by the development and implementation of a comprehensive alcohol-related harm reduction Plan for Manukau City, representing a comprehensive approach to alcohol harm reduction, as supported by the evidence. This would include measures to address matters including outlet density and the location of outlets, opening hours, marketing/advertising of liquor.

Alcohol Healthwatch further recommends that Manukau City Council ensure that any liquor control bylaws in place (liquor bans) are accompanied by the appropriate signage, and can be and are actively enforced.

The Manukau Alcohol Action Group wish to be assured that children's playgrounds are covered by the proposed liquor controls.

References

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