**From:** Christine Rogan
**Sent:** 21 December 2016 5:09 p.m.
**To:** Fannz <fannz@ahw.org.nz>
**Subject:** Seasons greetings and reflections

Kia ora FANNZ

The joys and turbulence of the festive season brings with it the opportunity to reflect on a year of hard work and dedication to make Aotearoa New Zealand a better place for all and to look ahead with renewed purpose.   This is certainly true for those helping our most vulnerable children and the families to build happy productive lives, and especially those who have picked up the batten for those living with FASD.  As we grow in numbers, knowledge (and determination ) the New Year holds promise of better things to come for those we serve and those yet to be born in 2017.  How we address alcohol-related harm now will impact their future.

There is still a lot of rhetoric about the ‘drinking culture’ as if it is one overwhelming thing.  The damage can seem insurmountable – but that is a lot to do with too little being done for too long.  Focus on the drinking culture is something the liquor industry loves because it is a convenient culture of blame - blame individuals, blame communities but whatever you do don’t blame us!  Blaming individuals deflects attention away from the Industry’s own dependence on heavy drinking to sustain profit margins.  It is a destructive bias that infects our alcohol policies and undermines efforts to curb the tide of harm and it unjustly stigmatises people.

Communities have fought long and hard for years to curb availability and reduce harm in their neighbourhoods, but are up against the liquor lobby with deep pockets. They have the right to participate but they dominate and challenge in the name of profit, a process set up to reduce harm (read 15 December report from researcher Nicky Jackson on [www.ahw.org.nz](http://www.ahw.org.nz)).   With the status quo being our hospital EDs and operating theatres brimming with damaged intoxicated people, mental health and addiction services overflowing – and worryingly more brain damaged babies being born, which side of ‘right’ are they on?  All this has stemmed from a so-called legal substance crated in and out of supermarkets and liquor barns on a daily basis in the name of profit.  How convenient it is to blame our young for drinking, and if not them, their parents. How much easier to blame women for binge drinking, for not knowing they are pregnant, for not knowing the level of harm this ‘legal’ product could be causing.  It is never right to blame a victim of circumstance.  To do so in the name of profit is despicable.

Indeed it is the festive season, but the legacy of alcohol is rarely the pretty image we see on the liquor billboard.  As described so eloquently by Dr James Fitzpatrick talking about the ongoing hurt from alcohol in the Fitzroy, *‘The river of grog fills the sad places in, so many lost daughters and sons’* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEJbB-Ke2tc> ).

And for the first time ever, the US Surgeon General reveals the truth in a report on addressing addiction (<https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/>), acknowledging that, *“Most Americans know someone with a substance use disorder, and many know someone who has lost or nearly lost a family member as a consequence of substance misuse. Yet, at the same time, few other medical conditions are surrounded by as much shame and misunderstanding as substance use disorders. Historically, our society has treated addiction and misuse of alcohol and drugs as symptoms of moral weakness or as a willful rejection of societal norms, and these problems have been addressed primarily through the criminal justice system.”*

It is time the ‘drinking culture’ debate is reframed.  2017 is the perfect year in which to ‘make the culture of blame history’.We are fortunate to have knowledge, compassion and strength on our side to achieve that!  Below are some wonderful messages of hope and healing to light our way!

Wishing you and your loved-ones a safe and happy summer break.

Christine Rogan

Health Promotion Advisor and FASD Project Coordinator

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**FASD TEDx Talk**

Watch this special 20 minute TEDx presentation about FASD in the West Australia Fitzroy Valley from the talented Dr James Fitzpatrick, Paediatrician. Click  [James Fitzpatrick TEDx Talk](http://www.nofasd.org.au/CampaignProcess.aspx?A=Link&VID=27364465&KID=275451&LID=1410163)

**Surgeon General report on addressing addiction**

This week, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy published a landmark report on addiction. Regarding FASD, the report says, *"In the United States, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) remain highly prevalent and problematic, even though they are preventable."* The report, titled "Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health" is a comprehensive review of the science of substance use, misuse, and disorders. <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/>

**Watch Recovering Hope from 2010**

This hour long video made for NOFAS is now available on YouTube. It is about forgiveness and unconditional love – by and for mothers who drank during pregnancy  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7zfJCW9Yco>

**Pre-emptive parenting strategies**

A study involving 31 parents and caregivers of children with FASD ages four through eight reveals that parents of children with FASD who attribute their child’s misbehaviour to their underlying disabilities — rather than to wilful disobedience — are more likely to use pre-emptive strategies designed to help prevent undesirable behaviours. Given the brain damage associated with FASD, pre-emptive strategies are typically more effective than incentive-based strategies, such as the use of consequences or punishment for misbehaviour. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0891422216302025>

**Brainwave Trust releases FASD fact sheet**

Please take the time to read the Brainwave Trust recently updated research article '[Drinking for two](http://brainwave.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0cb817ded650cb6979e766a9e&id=aeb5109b3d&e=13b79ea026)'



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