



Media Release

Sunday 11th December 2011

Despite a survey finding overwhelming public support for an effective response to our problem drinking culture, its findings have not been made available to those reviewing alcohol laws.

The survey was conducted in 2010 to inform the review of New Zealand's alcohol laws, but its findings have not been made public. Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says, given the massive investment of time and resources in reviewing alcohol laws over the last three years, and the high level of public interest in the issue, the withholding of this information is unbelievable.

The survey of 1,740 people undertaken last year for the Ministry of Health, demonstrates overwhelming public support for effective alcohol-harm reduction measures, including some ruled out by the former Government.

The survey found that 82% of respondents supported increased restrictions of alcohol advertising and promotion, with 50% supporting a total ban. Nearly 60% supported banning alcohol sponsorship of sport, music and cultural events that children and young people were likely to attend.

It also showed 78% support for returning the minimum purchase age to 20 years. Nearly 66% of people supported reduced opening hours of licensed premises, and nearly 60% supported increasing the price of alcohol.

In addition the survey found nearly 65% of people believe there are too many liquor outlets.

The findings strongly demonstrate that the Government has not accurately read the public mood for change on alcohol. "We've been delivered a weak package of alcohol law reform on the basis there was no public mood for anything stronger.

"Yet the survey clearly shows New Zealanders have had enough of the status quo, and will give their support to the most cost-effective measures available to address the unsustainable burden alcohol is bringing to our society."

Williams says increasing the price of alcohol and reducing the impact of alcohol marketing will be our "best buys" for improved public health and safety.

"There is also compelling evidence to show that reducing the number of liquor outlets, the hours they operate and returning the purchase age to 20 years will also work to reduce harmful drinking."

It will now be up to the new Parliament to ensure that the new alcohol laws reflect what the majority of New Zealanders want, she says Members of Parliament will have this opportunity during the third and final reading of the Alcohol Reform Bill.

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