



Press Release

25 August 2011

The Select Committee Report released today on the Alcohol Reform Bill kicks sand in the faces of all those from the community who have participated in the arduous process of alcohol law reform.

Despite acknowledging that most submitters wanted the Alcohol Reform Bill strengthened, the Committee have failed to respond to this, making only very minor changes to the Bill. The Committee is obviously divided, as illustrated by the Labour and Green Party minority reports tabled alongside it today.

While acknowledging the minor tweaks to the proposed legislation, Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams, says this weak Bill after all these years of review is incredibly frustrating and an insult to the thousands participating in these processes. The Committee has largely ignored scientific evidence and community expectations that their concerns would be taken seriously.

She says everyone agrees we have a significant problem with our drinking culture – resulting in a mountain of harm costing families/tax payers an estimated \$5.3billion a year. The resulting Bill is like sending in the tonka toys when the heavy machinery is needed. It's false economy in these challenging economic times.

Evidence is clear as to the solutions, and there is a good deal of support from within communities for effective measures. "An alcohol reform package without the essential ingredients that deal directly with the contributing factors is a waste of time and resources. Without the inclusion of the tools to increase the price of alcohol, phase out alcohol advertising and sponsorship and lower blood alcohol limits for adults, the legislation is unlikely to make even a small dent in the problem. Communities and public services will have to continue covering for weak legislation."

Williams doesn't believe the community will buy this as the best that can be achieved from this alcohol law reform process. The next Government can expect the community on their door-step from the get go.

"We have been through years of review and so called 'consultation'. Communities and individuals all across New Zealand have poured their hearts into their submissions, firstly to the Law Commission and then the Select Committee, with the expectation that their concerns will be addressed with a strong legal framework that supports and protects them. Without this we can expect alcohol-related harm to continue unabated."

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