



**Media Release
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Tomorrow's Project – Yesterday's Tactics

The alcohol industry's social change initiative being launched tomorrow is nothing short of a desperate public relations exercise, and is an example of a well worn strategy of the global alcohol industry. The alcohol industry, like their tobacco counterparts, is renowned for promoting strategies that don't work.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says 'The Tomorrow Project' initiative is part of an alcohol industry plan to delay and deflect the implementation of effective public policy measures. She says, continued industry self-regulation is at the heart of our problem here in New Zealand, as well as overseas. Governments now know that they need to restrict availability of alcohol and curb the relentless marketing in order to address the burden of alcohol harm experienced by the people of their nations. However, when they try to implement such measures, alcohol industry groups threaten legal action and offer these useless programmes as alternatives.

This so called 'social change' initiative is nothing but a smoke screen. It's an attempt to make it look like the industry is socially responsible, and that the government doesn't need to intervene. Williams says, "We know what will reduce alcohol-related harm and it isn't industry self-regulation and spin doctoring."

Alcohol is a leading risk factor of death and disability in developed countries, and the risks are not only related to heavy drinking. Best practice "low risk" guidelines recommend that healthy men and women drink no more than 2 standard drinks on any day to reduce the risk of lifetime harm from alcohol. New Zealand has already surpassed this level on a per-capita consumption basis. Williams says that this challenges our perceptions of moderation. "I don't think New Zealanders are aware of the level of risk associated with alcohol. The alcohol industry works to ensure that they don't. When our laws and regulations are lax, they can get away with painting a glowing portrait of this drug that masks its inherent risk."

Governments across the world need to resist alcohol industry pressure, put public health and safety ahead of commercial gain and implement the measures set out in the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol. New Zealand's blueprint for change lies in the Law Commission's final report on their review of the regulatory framework for the sale and supply of liquor.

For further comment:

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