



Press Release

4th November 2013

Lower blood alcohol level for drivers announced – a great day for New Zealand!

Today's announcement by Minister of Transport Gerry Brownlee that the legal blood alcohol limit is to drop is met with relief and jubilation at Alcohol Healthwatch.

Cabinet has agreed to lower the legal blood alcohol limit to from 80 – 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood for drivers aged over 20 years.

Alcohol Healthwatch has been a long time advocate for such a change and Director Rebecca Williams says, while the decision is long overdue, it is an important one for road safety. She says, finally we can get on with the business of further reducing deaths and injuries on our roads related to alcohol.

She congratulates the Cabinet in agreeing to the move and hopes that the relevant legislation has a smooth and speedy passage through Parliament.

"The research evidence is clear, the more alcohol in the system the greater the risk of being involved in an alcohol-related crash. It is also clear that impairment kicks in at relatively low levels of alcohol. It is important that all drivers are encouraged not to drink or at least limit their drinking to one or two before getting behind the wheel."

Public support for the lower level has also been high. Williams says that there have been a few detractors over the years who have opposed the lower level but their views run counter to the evidence and public support.

"The reduction in the limit will make a difference in reducing the burden of alcohol-related harm on the roads, and is also likely to support drinking moderation more generally."

Alcohol Healthwatch agrees that an infringement approach to offending between the new and old levels is the best way forward, saving an unnecessary burden on the court system.

For further comment contact:

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