

## **Alcohol Healthwatch - Media Release**

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### **Alcohol harm figures speak for themselves**

Figures released yesterday by Police Minister Anne Tolley show targeted interventions can work quickly and effectively to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol, says Alcohol Healthwatch.

Hon Anne Tolley announced a 22 percent drop in serious assaults, public violence and disorder offences and this was attributed to the introduction of the new liquor laws in December last year, especially those reducing the trading hours of licensed premises.

“We know restricting the availability of alcohol can make a difference in harm outcomes,” says Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams, “and these figures bear that out.”

Ms Williams also says the positive effect of the new trading hours sends a clear message to local councils who are developing their Local Alcohol Policies.

“Local councils simply cannot justify relaxing alcohol trading hours. This is actually an opportunity to achieve greater gains through tightening them further.

“In Central Auckland the effect of new alcohol laws was smaller with an 11 percent reduction, so further restrictions on the maximum default trading hours, and other measures to restrict availability of alcohol must be included in Auckland’s draft Local Alcohol Policy which is due out for consultation soon.”

In contrast to the positive effects of the new trading hours, other New Zealand policies aren’t working according to a new study published in the latest edition of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

The study by Massey University researchers Taisia Huckle and Karl Parker found the increased risk of 18 and 19 year-olds being harmed in an alcohol-related vehicle crash since the lowering of the minimum purchase age in 1999 has been maintained. They concluded that lowering the purchase age for alcohol was associated with a long-term impact on alcohol-involved crashes among drivers aged 18 to 19 years. As the New Zealand Law Commission recommended in 2010, Huckle and Parker say raising the minimum purchase age for alcohol would be appropriate.

Williams says with 25 percent of New Zealand drinkers drinking a large amount at least monthly, and one in five drinkers having a hazardous drinking pattern, it’s about time the Government took a more consistent approach to alcohol policy.

“All political parties need to show their colours in this regard so these matters can be part of voters’ decision making in this year’s election,” she said.

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Further comment or information please contact Rebecca Williams, Director Alcohol Healthwatch on (09) 520 7035 or 021 862 250.