



ALCOHOL
HEALTHWATCH

MEDIA RELEASE
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Communities and families short-changed by alcohol proposals

It has been reported in the media recently that Justice Minister Mark Burton is seeking feedback from allied parties on a range of proposals to address youth drinking following a review into the sale and supply to minors. Alcohol Healthwatch believes that the proposals, as reported, will have little impact nor will they meet community expectations.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says that community concerns regarding alcohol have been well articulated in recent times, in some instances by families who have experienced tragic losses as a result of our binge friendly environment. She believes there is a growing public understanding and support for more effective measures to reduce the burden of harm associated with alcohol.

Williams says there is strong public support for returning the legal purchase age to 20 years and the community also wants greater influence over local licensing decisions, especially those concerning the number and location of licensed premises and their opening hours.

Williams says without including a response to these and other issues such as price and alcohol marketing, communities will have a fruitless wait for change. Meanwhile our young remain an open market for the liquor industry to take advantage of.

Of the reported proposals Alcohol Healthwatch supports the zero tolerance of alcohol consumption for drivers under 20 years however, Williams says that this must be accompanied by a reduction in the adult limit as well. There also appears to be a move towards mandatory ID. Alcohol Healthwatch supports this move and believes these approaches would also have public support.

Alcohol use has been estimated to cause 31.5% of deaths in 15-29 year old men in the developed world*. In this light Williams questions the efficacy of the reported proposals when far more effective strategies have been rejected. The New Zealand community will feel let down. She says the proposals appear to put the emphasis on changing youth behaviour rather than on creating a more supportive environment that de-emphasises alcohol use.

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Action on Liquor Campaign information and briefing papers (including topics Blood Alcohol Concentration, alcohol advertising and marketing, taxation, sale of liquor) be found at www.ahw.co.nz

* www.thelancet.com Published online March 27, 2007