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Using children to market alcohol is an abuse, says Alcohol Healthwatch.

Alcohol Healthwatch says a New World supermarket float at last years Kerikeri Santa Parade was an example of gross social irresponsibility. The float was dedicated to promoting a beer brand and carried children. "Alcohol Healthwatch condemns the supermarket's action as an abuse of children and of the store's privilege to sell liquor," says Director Rebecca Williams.

Williams says their actions illustrate how the system allowing the alcohol industry to regulate its own behaviour is a farce. Not only did New World elect to use the children's/family event to promote alcohol they also chose to use children to do so.

"A self-regulatory code exists to ensure social responsibility when the industry markets alcohol and this was anything but. Leave them to look after themselves and this is what they do."

Williams calls on the Government to take a serious approach to restricting alcohol marketing in response to the Law Commission review.

The New World supermarket website says the chain is 'committed to being a positive force in local communities'. Ms Williams says that using children to market alcohol can cause incredible social damage and makes a mockery of their claim.

"Children and adolescents are the ones most at risk from alcohol advertising. There is no doubt that exposure to alcohol marketing results in earlier drinking and heavier drinking. Using children in this way is a double crime."

She says New Zealand is awash with alcohol promotion and we've completely bought into it as a society. Supermarket influences on this are profound.

"Stricter government controls are required to ensure that children and young people are not exposed to alcohol marketing," she said.

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