

## Season's Greetings to you all!

It's been a very exciting and busy year for all of us involved in the alcohol harm prevention arena.

The Law Commission have completed their review of alcohol laws, and the Government have responded with their Alcohol Reform Bill.

It is now time to have our say through making a submission, and this newsletter includes a brief guide to support this process.

More information is available at [www.ahw.org.nz](http://www.ahw.org.nz), and on the end of the phone should you need it.

Further **It's Our Turn to Shout** Media and Policy training workshops are planned for early in the New Year so check in at [www.ourturn2shout.org.nz](http://www.ourturn2shout.org.nz) for opportunities in your neck of the woods.

We have also developed tools for submission writing workshops and can offer some assistance in hosting these.

In the meantime it's time to down tools have a good rest so we are all refreshed for the next leg of the law reform journey.

***Merry Christmas - Meri Kirikimete***

**Safe and relaxing holidays**

from the AHW team: Christine, Julia,  
Roanne, Sopo, Suzanne and Rebecca.



## Alcohol Law Reform Forum

Last month at Alcohol Healthwatch's *Creating a Brighter Future – Alcohol Law Reform Forum* the Minister of Justice Hon. Simon Power presented the Government's response to the Law Commission's review.



*Justice Minister Hon. Simon Power speaking at "Creating a Brighter Future" Forum.*

Minister Power reiterated an earlier message that the Government is prepared to listen to community concerns about alcohol, and stated that the Alcohol Reform Bill is "Parliament's starting point for alcohol reform – not the end point."

The forum provided delegates with the opportunity to discuss and debate the key law reform issues and become engaged with the law reform process.

The vast majority of participants at the forum called for the law reform process to include stronger measures to address alcohol pricing, marketing and drink-driving.

Other presenters at the event included Professor Sally Casswell from SHORE/Whariki Research Group, Massey University, and Dr Shanthi Ameratunga from the School of Population Health, University of Auckland.

## FASD Expert Visits New Zealand

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*Dr Albert Chudley (centre front) with New Zealand clinical teams*

Alcohol Healthwatch has proudly sponsored Professor of Paediatrics Dr Albert Chudley from Winnipeg, Manitoba to New Zealand. While here Dr Chudley provided a keynote address at the 2010 Paediatric Conference in Taranaki.

Dr Chudley is the primary author of the Canadian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Diagnostic Guidelines, and was brought to New Zealand to promote further learning in the delivery of a multidisciplinary diagnosis.

Dr Chudley also provided a workshop in Auckland on the 'hands-on' use of the clinical tools used to make an accurate diagnosis.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term that describes a constellation of diagnosis ranging from the full Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) - characterised by facial growth and evidence of brain dysfunction - through to alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorders (ARND) which relates to the damage alcohol causes to the developing brain throughout pregnancy.

The variability in outcomes is due to a number of factors including genes, and the amount and timing of exposure.

In 2009, Alcohol Healthwatch released a report on diagnosing FASD in New Zealand with a

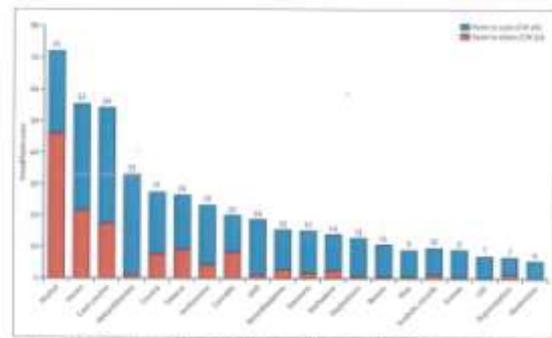
recommendation to increase clinical capacity in New Zealand. That work was possible through a Government grant. A copy of that report can be found on the Alcohol Healthwatch website [www.ahw.org.nz](http://www.ahw.org.nz)

The clinicians involved with that project are assisting with the current round of training to ensure consistency and continuity of assessments can be achieved.

This has been possible thanks to the funding support of the Alcohol Advisory Council. The clinical training for three child development teams from North Island centres will continue through until mid 2011.

## Alcohol More Harmful Than All Other Drugs

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In a comprehensive multi-criteria analysis of drugs of potential misuse, UK Professor David Nutt and other members of the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs, have found that alcohol scores highest overall out of the 20 drug assessed.

The range of drugs were assessed using 16 criteria clustered into categories of physical, psychological and social harms, nine looking at harm to the individual and seven harm to others.

Heroin, crack cocaine and methamphetamine were found to be the most harmful drugs to individuals whereas, alcohol scored higher when harm to others was included making it the most harmful drug overall.

Their analysis and findings are consistent with previous studies from Europe. The authors point out that these findings correlate poorly with the present drug classification in the law and suggest that aggressively targeting alcohol harm is valid and necessary.

Source: [www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com) Vol 376, Nov, 2010.

## **Planned Pregnancy No Guarantee Baby Safe From Alcohol**

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A \$5 million University of Auckland study is underway in Auckland and Waikato to follow the development of 7000 babies born in 2010.

Prior to giving birth, their mothers were asked about diet and lifestyle before and during pregnancy. The study found that 40% of pregnancies were unplanned, which may place the baby at risk of the mother's drinking, eating and smoking before the pregnancy is realised.

The study found that almost a third (31%) of women who fell pregnant by accident drank alcohol during the first three months of their pregnancy compared to 17% of the women who planned to get pregnant.

This indicates that most women are heeding the Health Ministry advice to avoid alcohol when pregnant or planning to be pregnant but there is still a concern that so many women are not receiving or heeding that advice.

The drinking during pregnancy rate in New Zealand remains higher than in Canada where the overall rate is around 10% (Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada, 2010).

## **Alcoholic Energy Drinks Dangerous and Banned in America**

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Alcoholic energy drinks are to be taken off store shelves in America after officials from the Federal Drug Administration, the Federal Trade Commission and the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau notified four producers of the drinks that their product was deemed unsafe and constituted a public health concern.

The addition of caffeine stimulants added to alcohol were considered a dangerous combination of two drugs, and according to the director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy were "designed, branded and promoted to encourage binge drinking."

The four companies, Phusion Projects, United Brands, Charge Beverages and New Century Brewing were given 15 days to respond to the claims or face product seizure. Since then the producers have stopped shipping the drinks.

Currently New Zealand has no controls in place regarding caffeinated alcohol products. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), the Trans-Tasman Authority that controls food content and labelling, currently requires caffeinated energy drinks to carry health advisory labelling, however this does not apply to the alcoholic beverages codes.

It is hoped that the USA decision to ban such products will prompt action to protect consumer safety in this part of the world.

## Safer Summer Campaign

For the second year in a row the Safer Summer Campaign took place at Smales Farm Technology Office Park on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The aim of the campaign is to get important road safety messages across to workers at the site and members of the public before the holiday break.

The campaign highlighted the importance of keeping safe on the road over summer by planning before you party and not drinking and driving.

The event featured a number of fun activities including the *fatal vision* demonstration. This involved an individual wearing a pair of fatal vision goggles and completing an obstacle course. Fatal vision goggles are training tools used to visually demonstrate various levels of intoxication and the dangers of impaired driving.

Another tool used to educate individuals on the risks of drinking and driving was the *intoxiclock*. The intoxiclock demonstrates how alcohol affects a person's blood alcohol concentration. It shows how a person's level of intoxication changes with increasing levels of alcohol consumption and the rate at which the body metabolises that alcohol given a person's weight, gender and drinking pattern.

The Police opened the Booze Bus to the public and were on hand to answer any questions on what happens when an individual is caught drinking and driving.

The Grim Reaper from the ACC advertisements sat beside his risk wheel to highlight the importance of being careful at intersections.

The campaign is run as a joint collaboration by Auckland Council, New Zealand Police, Alcohol Healthwatch, ACC, Brain Injury Association and Smales Farm.



*The Grim Reaper with Alcohol Healthwatch's Julia Rogan at Safer Summer*

## Coming Events

*The Second Sport and Alcohol Conference  
'Finding the Balance'*

9-11 February 2011

Massey University, Auckland

Organised by the School of Sport and Exercise, Massey University

*6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Drugs and Young People*

2-4 May 2011

Melbourne

Visit [www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au) for further details



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