

Having your say on the Alcohol Reform Bill

The following is a brief guide to the Alcohol Law Reform process, and provides some assistance with writing your submission.

Background

On 23 April 2010, the Law Commission released its final report *Alcohol in our lives: Curbing the Harm*, following its comprehensive review of New Zealand's liquor laws. Close to 3000 submissions were received on their original issues paper *Alcohol in our lives*, the largest number ever received on a social issue.

In its final report the Law Commission agreed with Alcohol Healthwatch's assertion that our current alcohol law is serving counter to its object, resulting in increased harm rather than reduced harm.

The Law Commission made 153 recommendations designed to work as a package to support a change in our harmful drinking culture.

The Government released its response in August, accepting or partially accepting 126 of the Law Commission's recommendations. However, measures to raise prices, restrict marketing, or lower the adult blood alcohol limits for driving were not included in the law reform package, despite strong evidence of effectiveness, and a high level of public support.

In late October the Government released the *Alcohol Reform Bill* and is calling for the public to now make submissions to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee before **18th February 2011**.

Why we need to change our current liquor laws?

Over the past twenty years, there have been profound changes in how liquor is sold and promoted.

When the Sale of Liquor Act 1989 was enacted it aimed to establish a 'sophisticated café society' by liberalising the sale and supply of alcohol.

Since then we have seen:

- Licensing processes freed up
- Licenses becoming easy to get and hard to lose
- Communities losing the right to object to licenses
- Wine and beers introduced into Supermarkets
- Brand advertising allowed
- RTDs/Alcopops introduced
- Purchase age lowered from 20yrs to 18yrs.

As a result of these changes we have seen the number of liquor outlets more than double from 6,296 in 1990 to 14,424 in 2010. Alcohol has become increasingly more affordable and total overall consumption has continued to trend upwards.

New Zealand Police have demonstrated that a disproportionate use of police resources is required to clean up scenes of disorder, offending, and saving intoxicated people from themselves and others. Doctors and nurses at emergency facilities also see alcohol-related damage first hand every day.

What is a submission?

A submission is simply a letter to Members of Parliament who sit on a Select Committee. It sets out what you want the Government to know and change about a Bill (a 'Bill' is a piece of draft legislation that is being proposed and considered).

Once the written submissions process is closed, the Committee will set a date to hear oral submissions.

If you wish to speak to the Committee in person, you need to state this in your written submission first.

How do I make a submission?

A submission can be as short or long as you like and as creative as you like. You can use the Parliamentary online process to submit electronically or you may prefer to write and post your submission (see below for postal details).

Be sure to tell them who you are and your address.

It is important to know that submissions to a Select Committee become public information unless you state that you want some or all of your information to remain confidential.

There is no particular way in which a submission should be written however, it is important to be clear and concise, and state what you support, what you would like to see changed and how.

There are some helpful website links and a submission template available on www.ahw.org.nz

You can help create better alcohol laws

Make sure your submission is sent to the Select Committee before **FRIDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2011**.

TWO copies of your submission can be either posted in a **STAMPED** envelope addressed to

Committee Secretariat
Justice and Electoral Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

or **ONE** copy can be submitted online for free at www.parliament.govt.nz

You could use the submission template at www.ahw.org.nz to help you write your submission.

What should I include in my submission?

The **Alcohol Reform Bill** included 416 clauses covering a wide range of issues.

Some may choose to work through the detail but for those of you who want to focus on key issues the following may assist.

You can include comments and recommendations on any or all of the following **12 Key Issues**. Of course you can add others as you wish.

- Minimum Legal Purchase Age
- Supply to Minors
- Tax/Price
- Trading Hours
- Treatment
- Alcohol in Public Places
- Regulating Alcohol Products
- Drinking and Driving
- Local Alcohol Policies (Community Say)
- Licensing Criteria (Outlet Density)
- Advertising/Sponsorship/Promotions
- Offences, Monitoring and Enforcement

Brief information sheets on each of these issues can be found at www.ahw.org.nz. Each sheet includes a summary of the Law Commission recommendations, the Government have response and submission options for you to consider.

Need help?

If you have questions or need help with making your submission to the Alcohol Reform Bill contact:

The Alcohol Healthwatch team
ahw@ahw.org.nz or ph 09 520 7036

Or

Refer to the Alcohol Reform submission toolkit by visiting our website www.ahw.org.nz