

Dear News & Views readers,

Season's greetings to you all.

Welcome to this bumper edition of our newsletter.

We've held back its publication so we could report on the status of the alcohol-related Bills that were frozen prior to the election. We do hope you can enjoy reading it over the holiday period.

We also introduce you to our new logo. We will be launching our new website in the New Year.

We wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and New Year and look forward to making the most of the opportunities 2009 has to offer for making New Zealand a safer and healthier place.

Rebecca and the Alcohol Healthwatch Team



Bills Reinstated

Five alcohol-related Bills, which had been 'frozen' prior to the election, have been reinstated by the new Parliament at its first sitting on the 16th December 2008.

Alongside Manurewa MP George Hawkins' Sale of Liquor (Objections to Applications) Amendment Bill and the former Government's Sale of Liquor and Liquor Enforcement Bill three other Bills are at various stages of progress. These include:

Alcohol Advisory Council Amendment Bill

Liquor Advertising (Television and Radio) Bill

Sale of Liquor (Youth Alcohol Harm Reduction) Amendment Bill

We now await to see just what happens to the five Bills as they come up for further consideration in 2009.

With these five Bills, the announcement of the Law Commission review on alcohol and the release of the draft National Alcohol Action Plan for feedback, alcohol was very much on the agenda prior to the election.

The Law Commission Review team, lead by Sir Geoffrey Palmer, have been engaging with stakeholders and hope to release a discussion document for public consultation mid 2009.

We discuss the National Alcohol Action Plan and the feedback from our recent Forum later.

In the lead up to the election we heard much about community safety issues, police resourcing and the need to manage health costs. In these challenging times, with frequent reporting of the current global economic recession, it would make sense to take a good hard look at the harm burden alcohol creates for this country. With this burden costing the country anywhere between \$1.4 - \$16 billion per year, there is significant scope for reductions.

Communities want and indeed expect change to be delivered sooner rather than later.

Focus on the NAAP

At a recent Auckland regional alcohol forum all attention was on the draft National Alcohol Action Plan.

Over 65 stakeholders from the Auckland region and beyond gathered at the Waipuna Conference Centre on the 15th October 2008 with the specific purpose of reviewing the draft document and formulating recommendations.

“It’s fair to say that there was significant dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of current policies and plans to address alcohol-related harm, and low levels of confidence that the proposed plan would achieve better outcomes,” says Rebecca Williams, Director Alcohol Healthwatch.

“As hosts of the forum we were interested in ensuring that Auckland stakeholders were fully engaged with the plan and enabled to make comment on it,” says Williams.



Forum attendees discussing the draft National Alcohol Action Plan

The following recommendations were developed and forwarded to the Ministry of Health.

In making the following recommendations Forum delegates wish to acknowledge the work done in developing and drafting the Plan.

It is recommended that:

- *Treaty of Waitangi Principles be made explicit in the NAAP and it’s Goals*

- *Measurable outcomes/objectives (SMART) are included in the Plan – particularly in relation to the risks and harms that are being reduced.*
- *Effective policies are actually implemented as per existing evidence-base (as opposed to being further considered/reviewed/investigated)*
- *The Plan reflects greater engagement/involvement with community (community groups and NGOs)*
- *The Plan provides clear and specific mechanisms for community leadership and partnership*
- *That both Maori and Pacific Taskforces are established with the mandate to inform and influence the further development of the Plan and monitor its impact/effectiveness for Maori and Pacific peoples.*
- *Actions are included that ensure that “real and relevant” information is shared with the public/community. (note “empowering” rather than “telling”)*
- *The Plan is more specific (“has teeth”)*
 - *Demonstrates accountability,*
 - *Identifies partners/partnerships*
 - *Takes tactical action – e.g. abolish alcohol advertising/replace with alternative messages/sponsorship, reduce the BAC and evaluate the effects*
 - *provides for community input into local liquor licensing – outlet density/location rather than leaving it to chance*
- *A more comprehensive strategy is developed to provide for and show the linkages between national, regional and local action/agencies and other strategies*
- *The Plan more clearly reflects/demonstrates intersectoral collaboration*
- *The Plan more clearly reflects/demonstrates the mechanisms that will contribute to sustainability*
- *The Plan is strengthened to be an international leader*
- *It is made clear as to how the plan actually reduces inequalities (link between the actions and the “themes”).*

New research highlights risks for Tertiary Students

Two new pieces of research further illustrate the factors influencing alcohol-related harm for university students.

A web-based survey of 2,548 undergraduates in New Zealand found that 37% reported 1 or more binge episodes in the last week, 14% of women and 15% of men reported 2+ binge episodes in the last week, and 68% scored in the hazardous range (4+) on the AUDIT consumptions subscale.

Thirty three percent (33%) reported a blackout, 6% have unprotected sex and 5% said they were physically aggressive toward someone in the preceding 4 weeks.

Nine percent (9%) of women and 11% of men reported either drink-driving or being a passenger of a drink-driver.

Researchers Kypros Kypri et al. identified risk factors for frequent binge-drinking, these included lower age, earlier age of drinking onset, monthly or more frequent drinking in high school, living in a residential hall.

A second study relating to students, also undertaken by Kypros Kypri et al. links outlet density with individual drinking and related problems.

While there were significant associations relating to both on and off-licence outlets, effects were larger for off-licences and for 1 km densities.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says that the research will further inform the work of the National Advisory Group on Tertiary Student Drinking. The Group is currently developing a strategic framework to respond to the issue.

For more details on this contact Anne-Marie Cury, Health Promotion Advisor Alcohol Healthwatch on Ph: (09) 520 7038 or email: anne-marie@ahw.co.nz.

Latest Research on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

International guest speaker Dr Paul Connor, a specialist neuro-psychologist from Seattle USA, spoke on the subject of 'FASD and Mental Health' at an Auckland seminar hosted by Alcohol Healthwatch marking International FASD Awareness Day on September 9th.



*Dr Paul Connor
Washington University
Seattle USA*

Dr Connor's presentation set out what is currently known about the teratogenic (cell mutating) effects of alcohol on brain structure and function during gestation and the life outcomes for those affected.

These effects can be pervasive, variable (because of the variation in timing, dose and genetics) and profound. They can also be hidden and misunderstood, adding greatly to the burden of harm experienced.

The most commonly recognized cluster of physical and mental disorders associated with alcohol and pregnancy is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). However, FAS accounts for around 20% of cases. The other 80%, being predominantly brain-based disorders, must be assessed neuro-psychologically for a clinical diagnosis to be made. Diagnosing Alcohol-related Neuro-developmental Disorder (ARND) is made more difficult by the symptoms mimicking other disorders or being overlaid by other disorders. In these cases, confirmation of maternal exposure is essential.

Dr Connor discussed the issue of whether the brain damage in a person with the physical features of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome was more severe than those without the associated physical characteristics. He pointed out that the physical features distinguishing FAS is

more an indicator of the timing of exposure at critical times early in pregnancy when organs and structures are forming, rather than an indication of severity of brain deficits. The brain on the other hand is at risk of the teratogenic effects of alcohol throughout pregnancy. Therefore cognition and executive functioning¹ may be similar irrespective of physical findings associated with FAS. Paradoxically, the higher functioning individuals experience a greater degree of difficulty in society as their disability is not recognized and fails to qualify for support services, even though their need may be as great. Diagnosis and effective intervention therefore needs to be based on the individual's functional strengths and weaknesses rather than being based on their appearance or growth, as is often the case.

Studies of affected populations indicate that the vast majority have experienced significant mental health problems. Dr Connor urged mental health services to be alert to and screen for the possibility of FASD affecting some of their clients. Integrating this knowledge enables treatment to be targeted more appropriately, since traditional treatment methods may not work as effectively for this group.

Brain scanning using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) have become very useful assessment tools to elucidate the depth and scope of brain damage from prenatal alcohol exposure. These can show areas of structural and functional irregularities in the

brain. One area of particular interest being researched is the corpus callosum, the area in the centre of the brain connecting the left and right hemispheres. Studies of an exposed population show significant deviation from the norm found in the non-exposed individuals in the size, shape and positioning of the corpus callosum. An abnormally shaped corpus callosum can indicate brain damage in early development. The ability to 'see' such anomalies backs up what has been observed from 30 years of studying behaviour and functional outcomes in the affected population.

Dr Connor reminded the audience of the importance of identifying affected children as early as possible. One screening tool that holds promise, based on the corpus callosum study, involved a quick and inexpensive ultrasound scan of that area of the infant brain that can be viewed quite clearly through the anterior fontanelle, the opening in the top of a new born infant's head (Bookstein et al, 2007²). Such screening would enable a child thought to be at risk to be monitored and receive effective early intervention aimed at enhancing development.

If you would like further information, contact Christine Rogan, Health Promotion Advisor, Alcohol Healthwatch and the coordinator of the Fetal Alcohol Network New Zealand. Email; fannz@ahw.co.nz, DDI: 09 520 7037.

¹ Executive functions are a group of: Cognitive Abilities - self-regulation of behaviors, sequencing of behaviors, cognitive flexibility, response inhibition, planning & organization of behavior; A "Future-Oriented" Process - goal directed, delayed gratification; and an Integrative Process - perception, attention, memory, motor & general intelligence.

² Bookstein F, Connor P, Huggins J, Barr H, Pimentel K & Streissguth A (2007). Many Infants Prenatally Exposed to High Levels of Alcohol Show One Particular Anomaly of the Corpus Callosum. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, Vol 31(5) 1-12.

Enough is Enough

Communities across the country are taking to the streets and speaking out about the failure of Government and councils to protect their residents, especially our children and youth, from the impact of increasing numbers of liquor outlets. "The strength of community opposition really reflects the mood around the nation. People are sick of not being able to have a say where the liquor stores start up," says Howard Perry, Waikowhai Intermediate principal, in Roskill South, Auckland.

In the past four months, the communities of Oranga, Waikanae, Roskill South, Cannons Creek, Halswell, and Mairangi Bay have lodged objections to applications for new off-license in their areas with the local District Licensing Agency. These have then been forwarded on to be heard by the Liquor Licensing Authority (LLA). The LLA is a court with the responsibility to administer the liquor licensing laws and has the power of a commission of inquiry.

The LLA has reported to Parliament that it was "powerless" to respond to community concerns over the location of outlets, and requested the power to be able to refuse a license, where there was strong opposition from the local community (Report of Liquor Licensing Authority 1996 & 1997).

Research studies in NZ, Australia and the USA, show alcohol-related harm statistics rise in relation to the number of liquor outlets, especially in deprived areas and within a 1 to 2 km radius from the premise. But the judge is not able to rule on that basis, even though increasing density increases the alcohol-related harm, which undermines directly the intent of the Sale of Liquor Act, 1989.

Taima Fagaloa in Cannons Creek and Zena Wrigley in Roskill South, who recently coordinated petitions gaining between 700 and 1000 signatures respectively, said they had never seen the people unite and show such a

determined voice before. One long term resident of Cannon's Creek sums up the mood, "We are sick to death of it, enough is enough, we will fight this to the end."

Positive spin-offs have resulted in both communities. People have become aware of the need for liquor bans in the parks and the necessity of stepping up monitoring and enforcement to ensure people are feeling safe and able to move about their neighbourhood, without undue fear.

The applicant's withdrawal in Roskill South has led to the cancellation of the LLA hearing. The community are relieved but are still wary that another liquor licence application could be on its way over the school holidays. Safety issues expressed during the petition gathering will be aired with Police and the local council safety team in the New Year.

Meanwhile the Cannons Creek community still awaits the outcome of their objection, where the applicant did not appear at the hearing.

The two communities offered support and encouragement to each other as they developed their action plans. The sharing of information, strategies and tactics shows the conversation about alcohol is moving ahead nationwide.



Cannons Creek Community take to the streets

An urgent law change is needed to enable communities to determine the future safety and well-being of their neighbourhoods. Limiting the location and number of liquor outlets is an effective way to do this.

“Parent Pack – 10th Edition

Over 10 years ago, the North Shore community got together with Alcohol Healthwatch to seek solutions to the problems they were experiencing with teenage drinking and out of control parties. Among the host of ideas and strategies explored was a resource for parents. That resource, which became known the ‘Parent Pack’, was the first of many for North Shore families and the inspiration for other New Zealand communities to develop their own versions. “Whenever youth and alcohol issues are discussed, one of the first questions that arises is, “What are their parents doing about it?” says Christine Rogan, Health Promotion advisor for Alcohol Healthwatch. “It is very easy to point the finger but this is actually unfair. When asked, parents said that they felt ill-equipped to manage their young person socialising around alcohol. These children had grown up at a time when alcohol rules had relaxed and liquor was highly visible and accessible to young people. It is no wonder parents were feeling out of their depth.” The Parent Pack was a way to address this gap.

The evidence shows that parental involvement plays an important part in protecting young people from the harm associated with alcohol but they do need to know how to go about it.

Birkenhead/Northcote Community Coordinator Jill Nerheny, who has coordinated this project from the start says, “The resource provides parents with relevant information, contact details, tips and strategies but more importantly it aims to give them confidence and encouragement in what can be a challenging and isolating job at times”.

The ‘Parent Pack’, which is now funded each year by the North Shore City Council, reaches parents through the ongoing commitment of North Shore Intermediate schools. Ms Nerheny says such local partnerships are critical for long term success. “We are now

getting asked for copies by the Colleges concerned about their students. We can’t keep up with the demand.”



Jill Nerheny loading up the Parent Packs for distribution

The North Shore City ‘Parent Pack’ can be viewed at www.birkenheadnorthcote.org.nz

Reflections on Safe Communities Conference

By Anne-Marie Coury Health Promotion Advisor Alcohol Healthwatch.

“Working Together to Make a Difference”, the 17th International Safe Communities Conference, held in Christchurch this year, from 20th – 23rd October, coinciding with the accreditation of Christchurch as the 9th Safe Community in NZ and the 144th Safe Community internationally.

The WHO Safer Communities programme of change has been working across the Planet Earth for more than 30 years, a proven framework for achieving a locally responsive, sustainable, evidence-based approach to injury prevention.

The evidence is showing clearly that the model underlying the accreditation programme works to substantially reduce the injury rates in those cities and towns working under the programme.

The conference was a great opportunity to meet with other collaborators for change and to recognise and celebrate what works. This includes: top down and bottom up approaches, positioning of champions who model the message and communicate the sound-bites, and working from the inside out; building in sustainability, financially and socially. There are no quick fixes, and getting “buy-in” at the right levels with the right people in the right way does matter.

An emerging theme was the need to engage the business community in the Safe Communities movement.

Alcohol was on the agenda, with the Alcohol Liquor Advisory Council’s CEO Gerard Vaughan presenting the call for change in our drinking culture here in NZ.

Violence prevention programmes and strategies to influence the settings that impact on vulnerable people were a feature of the wide range of presentations.

I learnt professionally and personally from being amongst a large international group of collaborators for change, who were passionately committed to making a difference.

For more information on Safe Communities see www.safecommunities.org.nz

International – Scotland takes Action

Scotland’s Government has committed itself to a Framework of Action for tackling alcohol misuse with measures including: adopting better controls on the availability and marketing of alcohol; enhancing support for families and communities; improving enforcement; demanding greater social responsibility from the liquor industry; improving attitudes and choices by enhancing public awareness and understanding of alcohol misuse and responsible drinking;

improving support and treatment resources and capabilities. At the heart of the Scottish Framework of Action is the understanding that tackling alcohol misuse will produce opportunities for increasing sustainable economic growth. Scotland’s ambition is to create a more successful country through objectives that include:

- Reducing the burden of alcohol misuse on businesses, public services and the most deprived communities thus contributing to a Wealthier & Fairer landscape;
- Helping local communities to flourish, becoming healthier, safer places to live, where there is improved opportunities and a better quality of life, and where people live longer and healthier lives by tackling health and social inequalities;
- Enabling people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities where adopting a balanced and sensible approach to alcohol will contribute to increased positive physical and mental wellbeing outcomes amongst Scots;
- Promoting a Smarter Scotland by expanding and encouraging opportunities for Scotland to succeed from the nurture stages of life through to further, higher and more widely shared learning achievements by preventing the misuse of alcohol by young people, thus enabling young people to have improved opportunities to make positive choices, plus addressing the effects of alcohol misuse within families. (Donnelley, 2008)

Scotland’s plan of action is notable for emphasizing a vision for rebalancing the relationship with alcohol with the aims of reducing health inequalities and creating a smarter, safer, healthier and wealthier country. Scotland’s approach sees the misuse of alcohol reflected first and foremost from upstream positions of local and central government leadership responsibility and policy planning.

Glam night and not a Tipple in sight



The King's Ball event coordinator Melissa Gooch and partner

The people of Timaru show that it is possible to have a really good night out without alcohol. The King's Ball held in November was an event aimed at giving the local community good clean fun and a safe night out.

The event was also a fund raiser. The chosen recipient this year was the Fetal Alcohol Network New Zealand (FANNZ) www.fan.org.nz. Proceeds will be invested back into the Timaru district to raise awareness about preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

The event's Mocktail list provided a fun topic of conversation with some of the more outrageous drinks appealing to the adventurous. Putting a new twist on what usually are alcohol-based cocktails, presented the bar staff with a fun challenge. Even though selling alcohol would likely have brought greater profit to the venue, staff were very supportive and encouraging, and got right behind the cause.

The evening held many fun activities such as lucky ticket prize draws offering a flight with Air Safari Lake Tekapo, Gift baskets and \$50.00 vouchers. Along with these, king size chocolate bars were handed out for such things as 'Most committed on the dance floor',

'Best tie' and 'Who had owned their dress the longest'.

A number of teenagers attended the event. "The comments from this age group was very positive and saying that they can't wait to come along to the next one" said event organizer Melissa Gooch.

Fewer tickets were sold than hoped, due largely to the economic climate and holding the event close to Christmas – and a handful who didn't attend because alcohol was not available. Despite this there are plans to make the King's Ball a regular event.

"Our young ones really need a positive environment where they can see people having a fantastic time, letting go and enjoying themselves without the help of drugs and Alcohol, Ms Gooch says.

Coming Events

ALAC Working Together Conference 2009

"Our Community.....Our Say"

14th – 15th May 2009

Intercontinental Hotel Wellington

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