

News Views

The Newsletter of Alcohol Healthwatch

Sport and alcohol – an uncivil union?

Whether it's drinking at the local club after a game or event, spectator drinking at a match, or participating in an established boozy team culture, alcohol use and sport have a long established marriage. The union is also a deeply economic one. As broadcasters have suggested, for example, without alcohol sponsorship, professional sport in New Zealand would "wither and die".

New Zealand research on the sport/alcohol relationship is currently scant. Reports of its effects on health, impairment of performance and impact on communities are largely anecdotal. There are indications, however, of a growing recognition that the alliance is not a healthy one, as well as recognition that challenging this association may be one of the keys to shifting the drinking culture in New Zealand.

"To be at the top of your game, you can't be over-indulging in anything" –

Bernice Mene

In a bid by The Waiuku Alcohol Project to get locals to consider problems associated with the link, former Silver Ferns captain Bernice Mene was invited to address a meeting of interested groups this month about the benefits of proactive team practices around alcohol use. She discussed how strict management policies developed by the team impacted positively on team morale, as well as on their performance as elite sports women. "To be at the top of your game, you can't be over-indulging in anything," she said. "Even a few drinks affects physical recovery and an athletes' ability to train."

Local sports clubs, especially in small towns such as Waiuku, are a key social centre. They are also frequently where young people are first exposed to alcohol and to role models of heavy drinking. A recent Australian national survey* of 213 sporting clubs found drinking in sports clubs higher than national averages. Over a quarter of males and females drink at levels that risk short term harm every time they drink at their sports club. Over three quarters of survey participants reported that drinking is an important part of club camaraderie, tradition, a way to relax and celebrate after the match.

In Auckland, some licensing inspectors have reported that clubs, often sports clubs, are some of the worst sites for drunkenness in their areas. Restrictions on drinking behaviour are often limited, and they may not get the police attention of other premises. Some of the problems, licensing inspectors say, arise from the fact that club committee members change frequently and bar staff are usually volunteers, with a trained manager needing only to be available rather than present. There is also concern that special licences are not always obtained for events where doors are opened to members of the public, resulting in the club effectively functioning as a tavern or nightclub.

Also an issue here, as it is in other countries, is spectator overindulgence at matches. Wellington's Westpac Stadium marketing manager Steve Thompson says that it's important to proactively manage drinking at the stadium: "We use strategies such as limiting the amount of drinks, (to 4 servings per purchaser), doubling security in difficult

areas, closing bars if the crowd looks like they've had enough, using security cameras and having a policy of zero tolerance in the event of problems". While they had no problems with the 40,000 people present at the recent British Lions game, they've signalled to New Zealand Cricket that something has to be done about one day matches where a minority of young males have been a problem in what is, at least in part, a family event. Westpac management will be discussing with them the possibility of introducing alcohol free zones at these matches.

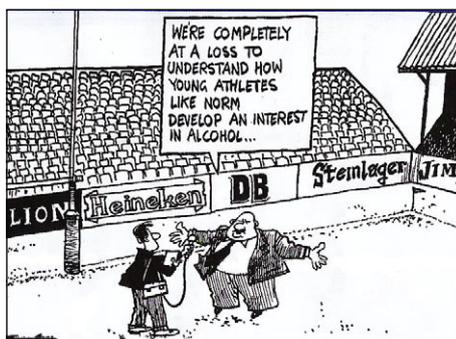
Overseas, Sydney has responded to similar issues with alcohol free zones in some cases. Drunken assaults at sports venues in California recently have sparked a campaign to fire catering companies with records of unsafe serving. In Los Angeles an agreement not to sell alcoholic beverages inside the Coliseum stadium during home football games has recently been announced. The sale or possession of alcoholic beverages at these games is no longer allowed because of "increased surliness, foul language and other behaviour that was harming the atmosphere".

Alcohol Healthwatch suggests that perhaps the most insidious part of the sport/alcohol relationship is the aggressive marketing of alcohol products in sporting environments. According to The New Zealand Sports Foundation, the value of alcohol sponsorship to sporting bodies back in 1996 was around \$50 million - and this is growing. It is evidenced by the ever present alcohol sponsorship at local clubs and teams. In the south, "Speights is synonymous with rugby", their website tells us. Sporting events, as often as not, come with an alcohol label – the Lion Round the Bays run, the Heineken Tennis Open, the Speight's Coast to Coast. Surfing events and magazines come with a strong Lion and Coruba presence. And the list goes on..... "Quite simply – it's a good investment," says Director Rebecca Williams. Sporting environments are often youth environments. Instilling brand awareness and identification from an early age helps to ensure many years of brand loyalty as sports lovers age.

"... it's time to look for ways to de-emphasize the role of alcohol in sporting contexts..." **Director, Alcohol Healthwatch**

Williams believes that it's time to more actively challenge the union of sports and alcohol and look for ways to de-emphasize the role of alcohol in sporting contexts. Just as the tie between sports and tobacco advertising has been severed, she says that it's time for efforts to seek alternative sponsorship to be stepped up. She says other strategies that need attention include compliance with liquor laws in clubs, promoting effective club and team policies, zero tolerance of drunkenness by stadium management and proactive intervention on an individual level. "Weakening the relationship will require courage, and a willingness to lose something in order to achieve greater gains," says Williams.

*Duff, Scealy and Rowland (2004) *The Culture and Context of Alcohol Use in Community Sporting Clubs in Australia: Research into Attitudes and Behaviour*



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On the marketing front...

Look-alike beer ensures kids don't feel left out

A look-alike beer for kids that has proved to be popular in Japan since its inception 2 years ago is expected to arrive in Britain soon. The non-alcoholic Kids' Beer is designed to look exactly like beer, sold in brown glass bottles and with a frothy head when poured. It contains guarana and tastes similar to coke. In Japan the packaging for the beverage depicts cartoon characters and carries the slogan: "Even kids cannot stand life unless they have a drink."

The prospect of Kids' Beer arriving in Britain is seen as "alarming" by the UK Shadow Minister for Children. It has also been criticised by public health groups, as well as by alcohol industry social aspects organisation The Portman Group, who say it risks fostering harmful attitudes.

The producer plans to export the drink to other European countries. Alcohol Healthwatch director Rebecca Williams says that while there are some cola products from Australia with beer style labelling in New Zealand shops, they have not yet reached this level of blatant marketing. She hopes the product will not make it to this part of the world. "The last thing we need is another way to socialise young children into the drinking culture".

The Sunday Telegraph 21.8.05

Attorney Generals push for stricter controls

Responding to surveys that indicate the extent of alcopop use by teens in the US, several Attorney Generals are gathering support for stricter controls over sales and marketing of low alcohol malt drinks such as Smirnoff Ice and Bacardi Silver. A survey by the American Medical Association released late in 2004 found that teen girls consumed alcopops more than any other type of alcoholic beverage, whereas adult women aged 21 or older rank it as their least-consumed alcoholic beverage. Teen girls reported seeing or hearing more alcopop advertisements than women 21 years or older.

Industry marketers push for cheaper alcopops

Meanwhile, alcopop marketers in California are pushing the passage of a bill which would redefine 'beer' to include alcopops. If passed, it would allow alcopop marketers to enjoy lower taxes, make the products more widely available and escape network television's ban on distilled spirits advertising. As this newsletter went to press, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, on record as saying he wants to protect young people, announced that he would not sign the bill, and called for a "full discussion of the issues surrounding flavoured malt beverages".

The Marin Institute, 12.10.05

New products get heavy marketing

Aiming to tap into and promote the rise of the 'cocktail culture', Absolut vodka have introduced a \$15 million campaign to promote their latest new flavoured varieties such as *Peach*, *Mandarin* and *Vanilia*. The brand director for Absolut admits that the consumer for Absolut flavours is indeed younger, and sees this brand appeal to younger drinkers as an "added benefit". Absolut's marketing budget this year is likely to be \$55 million in major media.

New York Times, 16.6.05

Product placement increasing

Product placement within a movie or programme is a form of advertising that often goes un-noticed. However US watchdog group *The Marin Institute* has recently drawn attention to yet another up-coming movie that prominently features of alcohol brands. Budweiser has paid a product placement fee to be featured in the comedy "*The Wedding Crashers*" (currently screening here). *The Marin Institute* has alleged that even though the movie has an R rating in the US, the product placement encourages underage drinking because its stars and themes have appeal to adolescent males. Other recent PG rated movies where alcoholic beverage placements have raised concerns include *Spiderman*, *Hellboy* and *Batman Begins*.

In some countries, for example Sri Lanka, where controls exist on other marketing, product placement in movies and television programmes has been identified as a common strategy.

New beer may get around the smoking bans

In Germany a new beer containing nicotine, known as *NicoShot*, is set to be launched. The producers claim that the beer can help smokers kick the habit by providing a steady, controlled release of nicotine. They say that patrons won't have to walk out of the bar for a quick smoke to deal with sudden withdrawal symptoms. One 250 ml can of *NicoShot* contains 6.3 percent alcohol by volume. Drinking three cans of *NicoShot* is equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes.

http://www.prweb.com/ October 10, 2005

Journal Special issue on Marketing

The Journal of Public Health Policy has published a special issue on Global Alcohol Marketing and Youth. The issue contains articles on measuring exposure to alcohol advertising in the US, reviews of evidence of influence of alcohol advertising, new policy responses to marketing, rap music and the youth market, trends in flavoured alcoholic beverages and the impact of trade treaties on alcohol marketing regulation.

All the articles are available to download for free at: <http://www.plgrave-journals.com/jph/>

When is a bargain not a bargain?

According to the core values on its website, The Warehouse sets out with one simple concept in mind: “To put the customer first and let everything else, every business activity and consideration, flow from that principle”. It espouses a “company conscience that understands and acts upon its social and environmental responsibilities” and believes in making a difference to the communities of which it is a part.

One would hope, then, that the consideration it is giving to entering the liquor market is in the context of these company values.

“We make a difference to people’s lives, especially family life, by making the desirable affordable”, the website says. This is exactly at the centre of concerns of public health advocates: The Warehouse entering the liquor market would represent a challenge to two of the strongest constraints on drinking — price and availability. It also draws attention to the weakness of these controls.

Alcohol is not an ordinary product. It has a causal relationship with over 60 types of diseases and injuries and is responsible for a global disease burden only slightly less than that of tobacco (WHO, 2002).

While it is now accepted that tobacco products are highly priced to discourage harmful consumption, alcohol remains a relatively cheap drug. This is in spite of the research identifying that price of alcohol is an important determinant of consumption across a range of drinking groups, including young people and heavy drinkers. Studies have consistently shown that, when other factors remain unchanged, “an increase in price has generally led to a decrease in alcohol consumption, and a decrease in price has usually led to an increase in alcohol consumption” (Babor et al. 2003).

In ALAC’s 2004 study of drinking behaviours in New



Zealand, three-quarters of 12-17 year olds and nearly half of adults disagreed with the statement “I can afford as much alcohol as I want” (de Bonnaire et al. 2004). New Zealand has no minimum price for selling alcoholic beverages. If the Red Shed does join the liquor game, there is speculation that this could result in lower priced alcohol, either by increasing competition in existing outlets or by importing budget drinks — perhaps even the “two-buck chuck” wines of overseas repute.

It would also amount to 87 new licensed premises increasing availability and the need for monitoring and enforcement of the Sale of Liquor Act. Not to mention that selling inevitably comes with marketing.

If it starts selling alcohol, the biggest difference The Warehouse is likely to make in communities is to exacerbate alcohol problems, particularly in vulnerable groups such as youth and heavy drinkers.

This issue highlights the potential for conflict between claims of corporate social responsibility and shareholder expectations. And it underscores the role of governments as the proper guardians of the public interest.

If we are serious about changing our drinking culture, the Government needs to develop better controls over the price, density and marketing of alcohol to prevent such developments hindering rather than helping efforts to reduce the harm from our favourite drug.

Anna Maxwell

Australian education campaign not a winner

A state campaign to deter the young from binge drinking, estimated to have cost the taxpayer millions, has failed, according to Victorian Government’s surveys. The campaign, which ran last year, used a range of youth-specific media including television (150 ads), print, radio, cinema and internet advertisements, as well as outdoor and in-venue locations. However, fewer than a quarter of young teens could remember seeing the major elements of the campaign, and less than half

of the young teen audience thought it would be effective. The message — “Is Getting Pissed Getting Pathetic? (Just Ask Your Friends)” showed drunken youths making a nuisance of themselves at parties by knocking over drinks and bumping into people. Many of those surveyed said they would not listen to or respond to such advertising and that members of the target audience would laugh it off or consider themselves too cool to take notice of it.

World Medical Association urges population based measures

A statement approved by physicians from more than 40 countries meeting at the annual World Medical Association assembly this month recommends far-reaching measures to reduce the global impact of alcohol on health. Alcohol, which accounts for as much death and disability as tobacco or hypertension, is deeply embedded in many societies, it says.

The statement supports population based approaches that affect drinking environments and the availability of alcohol, such as minimum purchase age laws, reducing legal blood

alcohol levels for drivers and controlling the number of sales outlets — measures which they state are more effective than individual, educative approaches.

The statement is strongly supported by the New Zealand Medical Association. NZMA Chairman Ross Boswell also states that alcohol abuse is a significant health problem in New Zealand, and that binge drinking among young teens has increased since it has become easier for them to pass themselves off as being of legal age.

UK Alcohol Deaths Soar

Deaths that are primarily alcohol-related in Britain have soared by almost 20% in the past five years, according to figures released last month by the UK Government. In some parts of the country, particularly the north and east, the number of people dying from diseases such as cirrhosis of the liver has risen by nearly 50%.

Marcus Plant, Professor of Addiction Studies at the University of West England, told the *Independent* newspaper that alcohol-related liver disease, which used to be seen only in middle aged and elderly people, is being diagnosed in more and more people in their 20s and 30s.

The release of the statistics has increased fears that the new liberalised licensing hours set to start in November will worsen Britain's binge drinking problem.

The Independent 18.8.05

“Drinking age” bill has new sponsor

The Sale of Liquor (Youth Alcohol Harm Reduction) Bill will not be dropped with former Progressive MP Matt Robson's failure to make Parliament in the election. The bill has been picked up by Labour MP Martin Gallagher.

If passed into law as is, the bill would raise the purchase age from 18 to 20 years, restrict supply to minors by adults other than parents or guardians and exchange oversight of broadcast liquor advertising from Advertising Standards Authority, a self-regulating industry body, to the Broadcasting Standards Authority. It would also place time restrictions on radio liquor advertising for the first time.

The bill passed its first reading by 78 to 41 in June, which means it will be reviewed at a select committee, and the public will be able to make submissions.

We await news of the larger review of the regulation of alcohol advertising promised by the Government earlier this year.

Staff Changes at Alcohol Healthwatch

We welcome Roanne Govender to our team as Community Health Promoter. Roanne's role will focus on the co-ordination of Liquor Liaison Groups and co-ordinating/ supporting projects and initiatives to reduce harm in the Auckland Region. Roanne is a recent Bachelor of Health Sciences graduate from Auckland University.

We have sadly farewellled Adrian Knowles (Waiuku Alcohol Project Co-ordinator). Many exiting initiatives have been developed under Adrian's guidance. He takes up a role with the Cancer Society and we wish him well in his endeavours.

We have welcomed SJimmy Fransen as Adrian's replacement and look forward to his input into the project and our team. SJimmy brings with him extensive experience in health promotion and community work.

Pseudo Patron surveys – a useful tool

The practice of using 18 year old “pseudo-patrons” is increasingly being applied by health promotion and enforcement staff to check whether licensed premises are routinely asking for ID. The practice typically involves giving an 18 year old ‘pseudo-patron’ \$10-\$12 to attempt to purchase alcohol. If asked for ID they are told to say they do not have any. As this involves no breach of the Sale of Liquor Act, the results are used for education and indicative purposes only.

Such an operation conducted by Northland Health last month indicated that, rather than checking that a young person is of legal age to purchase alcohol, not checking is by far the norm. Nearly two thirds of the 73 liquor stores visited made sales to 18 year olds without requesting ID.

Waitakere City fared better in a similar operation last month. All 24 largely Trust operated off- licences were visited. In this case, 45.8% of premises made sales to the female 18 year old purchaser while only 8.7% made sales to the (young looking) male pseudo-patron. Waitakere City is one of the last remaining licensing trust controlled areas in the country. Other than some club premises and wineries, the Trusts effectively have the exclusive right to hold off-licences.

Roy Hunt of the Safe Waitakere Alcohol Project, which undertook the operation, says that the operation will be used to improve ID practices by licensees, provide a baseline for measuring effectiveness of strategies and to inform Police controlled purchase operations.

A pseudo-patron operation carried out by Massey University last year for the Regional Alcohol Project showed that, across the Auckland Region, the proportion of premises that sold was 56%.

Alcohol Healthwatch believes that tougher measures to ensure patrons are of legal age must be introduced in New Zealand, as they are in some parts of the world. British Columbia, for example, has just stepped up enforcement of an already stringent law requiring bar and store staff to ask customers who appear to be under 25 years of age for two pieces of ID – one must be photo ID, the other include the person's signature. Pseudo-patron type operations there are conducted with individuals under the age of 25.

“If stringent measures such as this, or requiring all alcohol purchasers to show ID, are what is needed to prevent the sale of alcohol to people under the purchase age, then that is what we must do,” says Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams. She says that we must also be looking to reduce the use of fraudulent IDs.



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