



**A L C O H O L
H E A L T H W A T C H**

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In their report released today the Alcohol Advertising Review Steering Group has made some useful recommendations however, they have fallen short of doing what is necessary to reduce youth drinking and reduce alcohol-related harm.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says that leaving the reins in industry hands is a big mistake. We simply don't learn from other countries experiences.

Williams says that a move to "enforced self-regulation" as recommended in the report is the smallest possible step from the current voluntary self-regulation and that this is not enough to support harm reduction. The issue of controlling exposure of alcohol marketing to young people is one where the Steering Group have failed to act strongly enough. Effectively leaving this in industry hands means little public health gains will be made.

Williams says that a comprehensive ban on alcohol marketing, as we have for tobacco products, would have been quite reasonable given the costs of alcohol-related harm in this country and the change in culture we are trying to achieve. She acknowledges that a ban was always going to be a tall order in the present climate. However, anything other than a comprehensive ban is very difficult to manage as marketing techniques are so varied and pervasive.

We must get the fundamental principle right Williams says. We either want liquor companies promoting and glamourising alcohol to our kids or we don't. If we don't then there is little point in expecting the industry to do what is necessary.

Williams believes our children (those under the legal purchase age) see more alcohol advertising than those older. She is pleased that the Steering Group have recommended that the scope of the system be extended to include all forms of liquor promotion and marketing communications. Williams cites the popularity of Alcopops, or RTDs as they are commonly called, as to why we must think beyond the traditional forms broadcast advertising. The liquor industry often says that they don't 'advertise' these products yet the products in themselves are designed and marketed specifically to appeal to younger drinkers and develop the youth market. It is of no surprise that they have achieved huge popularity among the young, especially young women. They are more popular among 14 – 17 year old females than they are with those 20 and over.

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Report of the Steering Group for the Review of the Regulation of Alcohol Advertising can be found on www.ndp.govt.nz