



MEDIA RELEASE
Thursday 9 November 2006

The only winners from Parliament's decision last night to keep the alcohol purchase age at 18 years are the liquor and hospitality industries. They get to keep the heaviest drinking group as their customers.

The losers are young people, front line services, families and our community as a whole. While catering to the desire for 18 and 19 year olds to purchase alcohol, MPs have neglected the issues and wishes of the wider community.

Worst of all is that community expectations have not been met. Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says that MP's, especially the 72 who voted against the Sale of Liquor amendment bill last night, had better be prepared to front up to their constituents and make a commitment to supporting the implementation of other effective strategies.

The MPs voting against the Bill did so against strong evidence that they would see reductions in harm and significant public support for a return to 20 years, in some surveys as high as 75%. This is similar to the level of support for retaining the age at 20 years in 1999. Once again the public have been ignored.

The Bill went down last night but the problems it was attempting to address are still here. The New Zealand public expect and deserve urgent action on this.

Now there is an even greater imperative for other effective strategies to be implemented. Price controls, marketing restrictions and limits to the number of outlets must be prioritised says Williams. She believes our communities and services are already struggling to cope and some are not coping at all well. We are seeing increasing consumption overall so unless we take action now we can expect to see even more violence, more loss of life and more futures destroyed.

While the scope of the proposed review is unclear at this point any review must be timely and result in affirmative action.

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Action on Liquor Campaign information and a range of briefing papers on topics including taxation, sale of liquor, advertising and marketing can be found at www.ahw.co.nz