



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

**MEDIA RELEASE
10 October 2006**

The Green's bill calling for a ban on the broadcast promotion of alcohol, due to get its first reading in the House tomorrow, puts increased pressure on Government to take affirmative action on alcohol.

Already two other initiatives have highlighted the need to address the important issue of alcohol marketing. Alcohol Healthwatch director Rebecca Williams says this is no coincidence. She believes communities are starting to recognise that the powerful lifestyle messages used in the promotion of liquor play a key role in developing and maintaining our drinking choices. Williams says if we are serious about changing our drinking culture we cannot ignore the conflicting and overpowering messages of liquor promotion.

The Green's Bill, which has been sitting in the ballot box since 2002, would create an Act of Parliament to prohibit broadcast alcohol advertising on TV and radio. While Alcohol Healthwatch would like to see this extended to cover all media it supports the need for a legislative approach.

Williams says that a key point emerging from their recent alcohol marketing symposia was that government legislation was required to control liquor marketing. The current voluntary control by the industry of the content of individual advertisements was quite simply inadequate and also serves as a diversion from the cumulative effects of exposure. The French set a strong example. They ban almost all alcohol advertising in broadcast and print media and alcohol sports sponsorship. On other advertising only images of the product itself and its price is allowed. The French law, the Loi Evin, has withstood challenges in the European courts on public health grounds.

Williams says she will be interested to learn how Parliament receives the Bill tomorrow given that the issue is currently being examined by a review of the regulation of alcohol advertising. Additionally Matt Robson's Sale of Liquor (Youth Harm Reduction) Amendment Bill (now being sponsored by MP Martin Gallagher) also calls for changes to the way alcohol advertising is controlled.

The recent endorsement by member states, including New Zealand, of the World Health Organisation Western Pacific Regional Alcohol Strategy also paves the way for regulation of alcohol marketing.

Williams says that reducing the appeal of alcohol must be one of the mix of strategies aimed at reducing the burden of alcohol-related harm in New Zealand.

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Action on Liquor Campaign information and briefing papers (including one on Alcohol Advertising and an additional update on alcohol marketing) can be found at www.ahw.co.nz