



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

**MEDIA RELEASE
Friday 20 October 2006**

Finally common sense prevails on the alcohol purchase age. Even better that it aligns with the evidence and has strong public support.

The Law and Order Committee report on the Sale of Liquor (Youth Harm Reduction) Bill recommends that the legal minimum purchase age for alcohol be returned to 20 years.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says that finally it is acknowledged that the effects of reducing the purchase age to 18 in 1999 are unacceptable and have put undue burden on enforcement, health and social services and most importantly families and young people. Society as a whole has been paying for the failed experiment from day one.

Evidence clearly shows that if this recommendation is adopted this will reduce harm. Williams also says that the symbolic value of returning the age to 20 years cannot be over emphasised. It says that we treat alcohol differently to other products and that it is particularly harmful for young people.

The 18-19 age group are our heaviest drinkers, putting even younger people at risk. Williams says that the return to 20 will reduce access to alcohol by young people. This will have the effect of helping to prevent early onset of drinking, reduce the number of young people drinking and drinking heavily. We have to be aiming for these types of outcomes if we are going to break into our binge drinking culture.

With per capita consumption on the rise this will need to be one of a number of changes made in order to see the level of alcohol-related harm tracking in a different direction. Williams says that limiting alcohol advertising to young people would also be an important step.

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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