

# **SUBMISSION TO THE LAW COMMISSION**

## **Alcohol in our lives.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important aspect of New Zealand society.

It is well recognised that alcohol has a powerful effect in society. While many enjoy the extra conviviality and pleasure it provides, the savage effects of abuse permeate society contributing to much suffering and social dysfunction including death, violence, crime, rape, unwanted pregnancies, road crashes, illness, family breakup, wife/partner bashing, and child abuse.

The police estimate that approximately one third of all crime is fuelled by Alcohol. District Court judges estimate 80% of defendants coming through the district courts have alcohol or other drug dependence connected with their crimes. It is not only those who abuse alcohol who suffer. The wider effects on their families, friends, and victims are massive.

I am a believer in private enterprise and the 'free market' however alcohol is probably the most potent example of a simple fact that private enterprise only remains free, fair, and positive if there is an underlying moral/ethical basis underpinning it. Denial of responsibility for ourselves and others, and lack of recognition of basic societal responsibilities, leads to the attitudes that encourage excessive and binge drinking. The associated loss of inhibitions leads to many actions people would not take if sober, and which they regret on the 'morning after'.

Because of the nature of the problems caused by alcohol and the enormous damage it does in society the normal 'freedoms' of a free market society cannot apply with this substance. There are already rules in place however the 'experimentation' with lowering the drinking age, freeing up the issuing of liquor licenses, and extended hours for licensed establishments has simply contributed to rapidly escalating problems and proven that these freedoms cannot be responsibly handled.

**If we are serious about reducing the massively harmful effects of alcohol abuse, reducing crime, road deaths and injury, medical costs, unwanted pregnancies, and social suffering the time has come to take drastic action. Taxes, prisons, counsellors, police, and treatment costs could all be REDUCED with effective action.**

The following actions should be taken immediately:

1. No new liquor off licences issued for sales within 500 metres of an established license.
2. Sales of liquor at all off licences (including supermarkets) restricted to 10am to 10pm.  
Sales at on licences to be banned between 2am and 7am
3. Age for purchase of liquor to be increased to 20
4. All advertising and promotion of alcohol to be banned
5. Ban 'promotional pricing' of liquor. Selling under a minimum price to be an offence
6. Drivers blood alcohol limit reduced to 0.05 for those 20 plus. Zero alcohol for under 20's.
7. Ensure tax on alcohol covers all social and medical costs caused by alcohol
8. Make establishment of 'alcohol free' areas in cities and suburbs easier
9. Increase treatment opportunities including more totally 'dry' facilities
10. Change emphasis on public good advertising to "ITS COOL NOT TO DRINK ALCOHOL" showing young people having fun and refusing alcohol and in alcohol free situations.

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