

Let's get  
it right

# Advertising and the Alcohol Reform Bill

The alcohol industry spends a lot of money to make drinking look sophisticated, fun and sexy. What it doesn't show is the harm caused by alcohol. Let's get it right.

## Does marketing matter?

Yes. The alcohol industry spends over \$400,000 a day promoting drinking in New Zealand. At an estimated \$150 million a year, marketing and advertising of alcohol is a serious business designed to make people want to drink.

Alcohol advertising normalises drinking and sustains our drinking culture. Drawing on the best marketing techniques, alcohol advertising delivers sophisticated and subtle messages through a variety of media and formats.

The evidence shows alcohol advertising:

- encourages people to start drinking at a younger age
- encourages people who already drink to drink more
- makes it harder for problem drinkers to abstain.

Regulation of advertising, marketing and promotion is seen as the second most effective way to reduce alcohol-related harm.

## Is New Zealand getting it right?

No. The massive amount of money spent on promoting drinking ensures the primary source of information for most people about alcohol, and how to use it, is advertising.

There is very little control over alcohol promotion. Since early 1992, alcohol advertising has been self-regulated. The Code on Liquor Advertising is enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority, a private sector body representing the advertising and media industries.

The code relies on advertising standards being upheld by public complaints. No public complaint, no advertising standard breach. It's not working.

- Promotion of excessive alcohol consumption continues despite becoming illegal in 1999.
- A scene depicting alcohol occurs every 9 minutes during prime-time television.
- 90 percent of our children aged 5-17 see alcohol advertising on TV each week.

Marketing alcohol is now more than advertising on television, in print or on the radio. Social media, the domain of young people, has given the alcohol industry a new medium for driving demand by communicating directly to youth.

Marketing strategies also include product placement, price promotions and the design of products to target specific groups. The industry is deliberately using these strategies to target young people.

## What did the Law Commission recommend?

The Law Commission recommended a three-stage plan to control alcohol promotion, advertising and sponsorship. The process would take five years and phase out all forms of alcohol advertising.

**Stage one:** Makes it an offence to promote any event or activity that encourages excessive alcohol consumption. Promotions specifically targeting young drinkers will also become an offence.

**Stage two:** Creates a joint committee run by the Ministers of Health and Justice. This will oversee a programme to reduce exposure to alcohol advertising and increase control of advertising content.

**Stage three:** Restricts the advertising and promotion of alcohol in all media. Eventually, no alcohol advertising will be allowed, except if it gives factual product information.

## Does the Alcohol Reform Bill get it right?

No. The Government accepted stage one of the Law Commission's recommendations but rejected the rest. Despite it working well for tobacco, all the bill does is get officials to "continue to monitor the national and overseas research on the effects of exposure to advertising". That is a cop out.

The bill does make changes that focus on individual retailers. These include conditions about the placement of alcohol and related advertising within supermarkets and grocery stores and restrictions on alcohol discounting. Although these are positive changes, they are not broad enough to make a real difference.

## FACTSHEETS

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| 1 | What you need to know  |
| 2 | Alcohol pricing  |
| 3 | Alcohol advertising  |
| 4 | Alcohol availability   |
| 5 | Drink driving  |
| 6 | Mythbusting the alcohol industry   |
| → | <a href="http://drugfoundation.org.nz/alcohol-reform">drugfoundation.org.nz/alcohol-reform</a> |

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“ It's one of the few drinks where you don't necessarily know you're drinking alcohol, and that's a conscious effort to make those drinks more appealing to young people. [RTDs] are very much about masking the alcohol taste. ”

Mat Baxter, a partner at Australian marketing agency Naked Communications

“ After seven years, I can still be triggered into thinking drinking would be a good idea by advertising in all its forms. ”

Recovering alcoholic cited in Ministry of Health report

### Let's get it right

The public are extremely supportive of making changes to the way alcohol is marketed in New Zealand. Eighty-six percent of submissions to the Law Commission and the majority of submissions to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee supported restricting advertising of all alcohol in all media. It has worked for tobacco, it will work for alcohol.

To get it right, the Alcohol Reform Bill needs to:

- include the Law Commission's three-stage plan to phase out alcohol promotion and advertising
- place special emphasis on restricting new forms of marketing that target young people using social media and other forms of digital communication
- establish a fund to replace alcohol sponsorship of sporting or cultural events.

### ABOUT US



The New Zealand Drug Foundation has long been interested in how the law governing the sale and supply of alcohol could be strengthened to reduce alcohol-related harm and create a healthier drinking culture in New Zealand.

We provide leadership and representation of our nationwide membership of organisations and individuals working on alcohol and other drug issues.

This factsheet is one of a number we have developed as part of a toolkit to support Members of Parliament, the media, communities and individuals to engage in evidence-based discussion on the Alcohol Reform Bill.

### Let's get it right

#### FAST FACTS



# \$150 million

HOW MUCH THE ALCOHOL INDUSTRY SPENDS EVERY YEAR IN NEW ZEALAND TO MARKET ITS PRODUCTS



# 9 minutes

HOW OFTEN A SCENE DEPICTING ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS PLAYED ON PRIME-TIME TV



# 86%

PERCENTAGE OF SUBMISSIONS TO THE LAW COMMISSION THAT SUPPORTED BANNING OR RESTRICTING ALL ADVERTISING OF ALL ALCOHOL IN ALL MEDIA

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