

SUBMISSION TO THE HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITION
TO REVIEW ALCOHOL ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
FROM THE
GROUP AGAINST LIQUOR ADVERTISING
July 2004

The Group Against Liquor Advertising (GALA) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission, and asks to be heard orally also.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Alcohol is severely damaging the health and wellbeing of New Zealand society. Its advertising cannot be justified.

The Group Against Liquor Advertising has as its preferred option; the cessation of alcohol advertising on all New Zealand controlled media, and a phasing out of alcohol sponsorship.

Failing this GALA supports a system of regulation by a statutory body, comprised of a majority of public health advocates, and with pre-vetting and punitive powers.

Other restrictions we wish to see would be:

- Health and safety warnings on containers and advertisements
- Removal of tax deductibility for advertising and sponsorship
- A ban on products designed for minors
- More restricted advertising times on TV and radio
- Factual advertisements only
- More counter-advertising
- Restriction of sponsorship to adult activities

1. Background

GALA was established in 1992. It is a nationwide voluntary organisation, which enjoys the support of many individuals and groups. We are internationally affiliated with the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance. This group was set up at a conference in 2000 co-sponsored by the World Health Organisation.

For the past 10 years GALA has been educating and advocating for healthy alcohol policy. We recognise that alcohol is part of society, but that because of its mind altering properties it needs special legislative restraint.

GALA promotes a society free of alcohol advertising and sponsorship, in which young people can make choices about drinking without undue pressure from advertising.

2. Reasons for a Health Select Committee review

- There is an epidemic of binge drinking in New Zealand, producing serious health, social and economic effects. New Zealanders are consuming double the amount of alcohol today, than we did in the nineteen fifties.
- Successive reviews of broadcast alcohol advertising conducted by Advertising Standards Authority panels have focussed on the question of alcohol advertising and consumption. They have not addressed the questions of altered drinking behaviour as a result of advertising. Nor have they paid sufficient attention to the health and social effects of drinking, and the probable contribution to these from advertising.
- Industry self-regulation of advertising does not work, for a variety of reasons.
- An industry appointed panel would never recommend that advertising cease.
- There is clear public health evidence of what measures do, and what do not work, to reduce the harm from alcohol. This should be the basis of alcohol legislation.

3. How advertising works.

The purpose of advertising is to sell product. Advertising expenditure has multiplied seven times since the 1950's. (S Beder 1997) It is now big business, run in the main by international corporations. Companies such as Young and Rubicam, and Saatchi and Saatchi, apply their skills and research to selling alcohol in New Zealand. Advertising works by persuasion, through repeated exposure, by being barely perceived and by being attractive to the recipient. Advertising is essentially myth making. The point of most advertising is not to give us information about a product, but to establish an image for it. Advertising does this by linking the product with a quality or attribute.

“More and more it seems the liquor industry has awakened to the truth.
It isn't selling bottles or glasses, or even liquor.
It's selling fantasies.”

Carol Nathanson-Mogg, American psychologist specialising in advertising.

This myth making is almost always deceptive and often harmful. In the case of alcohol advertising it can be downright dangerous. This barrage of attractive and seductive messages infiltrates the audience's consciousness and creates an unconscious presumption in favour of drinking.

According to the Seventh Special report to the US Congress on Alcohol and Health

“There is evidence that people can acquire expectations about alcohol long before they take their first drink, and these early expectations are strong predictors of drinking behaviour in adolescence as well as of alcohol dependence in adulthood.”

An editorial in *Advertising Age* states that “Quite clearly, the company that has not bothered to create a favourable attitude toward its product before the potential customer goes shopping, hasn’t much of a chance of snaring the bulk of potential buyers.”

Here are some quotes from advertisers:

“Advertising is the medium that brings the message to millions. It helps increase the volume of sales and decreases the cost.” Full-page ad in NZ Herald inserted by advertising associations.

“Today’s kids influence over \$130 billion of their parent’s spending annually. Kids also spend \$8 billion of their own money. That makes these little consumers big business.” Turner Cartoon Network (USA) (Kilbourne 1999)

“Only 8% of an ad’s message is received by the conscious mind; the rest is worked and reworked deep within the recesses of the brain, where a product’s positioning and repositioning takes shape.” Rance Crain, Editor-in chief of *Advertising Age* (Kilbourne 1999)

“Buy this 24-year-old and get all his friends absolutely free.” An ad for MTV which encourages advertisers to target leaders among young people. (Kilbourne 1999)

4. The Public Health Impact of Alcohol

The World Health Organisation Report of 2002 ranks alcohol as the third leading risk factor for disease and disability.

In New Zealand 52% of adults can be classified as binge drinkers (ALAC Survey 2004).

The acute effects of alcohol, namely death and serious disability impact disproportionately on young people. Alcohol is related to the leading causes of death in people between the ages of 1 and 34. These are motor vehicle crashes, accidents of all kinds, homicide and suicide. (IPRU)

The chronic effects of alcohol are seen in older people, and include addiction, mental disorders, hypertension, heart disease, haemorrhagic stroke, and cancers of the mouth, lips, throat, gullet, larynx, liver, bowel and breast.

Both age groups are subject to acute alcohol toxicity.

The fetus is susceptible to maternal alcohol use. It is estimated that 100 newborn babies per year are affected by alcohol.

J Rehm and G Gmel (2000) list about 60 categories of disease, death and disability directly or indirectly related to alcohol consumption. Three or four categories of disease have suggested health benefits from alcohol.

5. The Social Impact of Alcohol

Wellington police reported that alcohol was a factor in 66 per cent of arrests for disorder, violence and sexual offending in central Wellington in 2003. At weekends alcohol contributes to 90 per cent of violence. (Grenfell 2003)

Alcohol is increasingly recognised as a criminogenic factor. (P Marriott-Lloyd, senior police advisor, 2002).

Alcohol is reported as a contributing factor to domestic violence (25% to 50%), child abuse, and marriage break-up.

The Accident Compensation Corporation states that 20 to 25% of occupational injuries involve intoxicated workers. (ACC web site)

6. The Economic Costs of Alcohol.

Although the Government receives about \$500 million in tax from alcohol, the cost of harm from alcohol is estimated at \$1.4 to \$4 billion. If total costs, such as lost productivity are taken into account the cost is about \$16 billion annually (Easton 1997).

The costs associated with a child with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome are estimated at US \$750,000 during its life. The incidence of FAS is about 1 per 1000 live births, thus there are about 50 born per year in NZ (Easton 2004).

7. The Impact of Alcohol Advertising on Young People

“A half truth is a whole lie” Old Jewish saying.

Children are susceptible to advertising, because they soak up society’s messages, not distinguishing between advertising and other forms of information, and unaware that they are being persuaded, and that they are not being given full information.

Television advertising works. The percentage of toys sold in the United States that were directly linked to movies and television rose from 10% in 1954 to 50% in 1990 (American Psychological Association. Washington DC 1990).

Adolescents are especially susceptible to advertising because of their stage of development. Through psychological and sociological research, advertisers learn how to exploit the needs of teenagers. Alcohol advertisements appeal to teenage rebelliousness, to teenage need for peer and sexual success, desire for fun, and liking of humour and up-beat music. They advertise dreams, images and lifestyles, associating them with their products.

They sponsor sports events, pop concerts, and fashion shows, which young people are likely to attend.

About a quarter of young people up to the age of 17, are still watching television at 8.30pm, and are exposed to alcohol advertisements. (Walters and Zwaga 2001)

Children and teenagers are constantly exposed to sponsorship advertisements shown at any time on TV. On radio, alcohol advertisements are permitted at any hour. Add to this the frequent use of alcohol within TV programmes, almost all of it with happy outcomes, and we see that children and teenagers live in an environment saturated with positive messages about alcohol.

In addition they are exposed to outdoor advertisements on billboards, liquor outlets, buildings, sports fields etc, cinema, and video. Internet sites with strong appeal to minors, through the use of games; videos, music and slang were identified by researchers. (Carroll and Donovan, 2002)

The cumulative effect of repeated exposure to alcohol advertisements leads to unreal, glamourised positive ideas about drinking. It encourages early drinking. (Wyllie et al 1989).

Since the advent of broadcast alcohol advertising in 1992, the amount drunk by teenagers in one session has doubled, from 2 or 3 drinks, to 5 or 6 drinks (Habgood et al 2001). We recognise that other influences may have played a part as well, but note the coincidence with alcohol advertising.

Young people are an important part of the alcohol market. In 2002 teenagers between 14 and 17 drank \$140 million worth of alcohol per year, or \$2.7 million per week (GALA 2002). Teenagers consume 8.2% of total alcohol drunk (APHRU 2001). They are also an important part of the alcohol market, as they become long term drinkers as adults.

There is evidence that the tobacco industry deliberately targets children and teenagers with its advertising (Philip Morris internal memo 1981). Evidence is emerging that that young people are the target of alcohol advertising. A US study found that teen magazines frequently carry alcohol advertisements. (Center for Media Education 2000) Many advertisements in New Zealand media appeal to children and teenagers. Image advertising makes the regulatory codes largely irrelevant.

For example research on the Lion Chinheads advertisements found that 97% of minors could recall the chinheads, 64% thought the humour appealed to minors, and 52% thought the chinheads had strong appeal to kids and young teenagers (CM Research 2001).

Lion's corporate affairs director said that the Chinheads was the most successful campaign in seven years. Andrew Tinning of Saatchi and Saatchi said that the agency's original brief was to target the youth market, and the response had been "gangbusters". (NZ Herald 16 May 2002)

Targeting of particular age groups may work in theory, but in practice the impact is indiscriminate.

8. The Impact of Sponsorship on Young People

Sponsorship is a commercial activity, which is made to look like a charity. It is an inexpensive form of advertising, providing ready access to a target audience.

"It's our intention that the millions of people who will watch the rugby World Cup in 1999 will do so with a glass or bottle of Guinness in their hands. That's what this sponsorship is all about." Guinness chief executive Colin Storm 1998.

There are no legal restrictions surrounding alcohol sponsorship, although there is a voluntary code for sports sponsorships. The only control is public opinion, which rarely comes into play. There is nothing to stop liquor companies sponsoring a kindergarten.

The size of alcohol sponsorship is not known. Liquor companies do not make their sponsorship expenditures known.

The impression is that sponsorship is becoming more widely embedded in the community. Sports are sponsored at all levels, from the Olympics to school teams and individuals. Activities most often sponsored are those popular with young people such as rugby, rugby league, surfing and yachting.

It fosters the unhealthy alliance between alcohol and sport.

Sponsorship is also common for music, fashion, and cultural events and educational opportunities. Even Rotary has formed an alliance with a liquor company.

A survey by Research International in 1996 found that there was widespread acceptance of sponsorship. More than a third of those surveyed said they would seek out products or services of companies sponsoring teams or events they liked. Among 16 to 18 year-olds this

figure rose to 50%. More than 40% of this age group said they would switch brands to support their preferred sport or event. (Glen 1996)

Sponsorship effectively keeps the company or brand name in front of the public.

The use of celebrities and heroes of the young implies that they approve of alcohol, a message that is accepted uncritically by their young fans.

Children see liquor logos on goal posts, clothing and sports paraphernalia from an early age. This effect is enhanced by sponsorship advertising, which is permitted at any time on television.

“Creating brand allegiance among children is an investment for the future.”

Dag Revke, alcohol researcher, Global Alcohol Policy Alliance, 2000

Sponsorship leads to dependence by sports clubs, educational and community organisations on liquor companies.

9. Designer Drinks for Young People

“Aggressive marketing of alcoholic products to youth is an important part of the problem.

Not only are children growing up in an environment
where they are bombarded with positive images of alcohol,
but our youth are a key target of the marketing practices of the alcohol industry.”

Dr Gro Bruntland, Director-general of WHO

There is no doubt that marketing strategies target young people. These include the development of spirit-based RTD’s (ready to drink) which are fruit, milk or sweet flavoured, colourfully packaged and given unusual and appealing names, to attract young drinkers. Many are designed to attract ‘starter’ drinkers aged 11 to 15. Some are packaged in screw top bottles, more like spirits bottles, which can easily be used for covert drinking, and have high alcohol content giving a ‘bigger bang for your buck’. They do not receive high profile advertising because it is unlikely to be cost-effective and could attract attention from regulatory authorities. The Select Committee should be aware of the expensively researched and sophisticated targeting of young people (Jackson et al 2000). Although it is illegal for minors to purchase these products, the industry has tailored them to their susceptibilities, knowing that they will obtain them from others, or illegally. We think this demonstrates extreme social irresponsibility. Appendix A (Jackson M, Hastings G, et al pp 602 to 604.)

10. Other groups Susceptible to Alcohol Advertising

While fewer Maori drink, those that do drink more (Bramley et al 2003). Some advertisements, such as the DB rottweiler TV ad, are especially targeted at Maori. Others use the word ‘mana’ to indicate success and masculinity.

Women, especially young women, are also being targeted in advertisements for all types of alcohol. Binge drinking among 16 to 24 year-old women has increased markedly between 1995 and 2003 (Goodyear-Smith et al 2004).

This is doubly serious, as women metabolise alcohol more slowly than men do, and there is increased risk of drinking during pregnancy.

Alcohol dependent people wishing to abstain, find that their task is made more difficult by seeing or hearing alcohol advertisements. (Thompson et al 1997) The treatment of alcohol dependence has a low success rate. Exposure to alcohol promotions undermines the resolve to change drinking behaviour, which is required for those who wish to escape from dependence.

11. What Does Research on Alcohol Advertising Tell Us?

(This section is from Alcohol Healthwatch Briefing Paper 2003)

Alcohol advertising research generally falls into 2 categories:

1. Studies which examine statistically the effects of advertising (often measured by expenditure) on a population's alcohol consumption. These are commonly called **econometric studies** and;
2. Studies which focus on the **effects of exposure to alcohol advertising on attitudes and behaviour in the young**. The argument put forward by the advertising industry is that alcohol advertising is targeted to reinforce brand identity, offset brand-switching and maintain market share rather than encourage greater levels of consumption. While the subtlety of alcohol advertising makes large effects of alcohol advertising on consumption difficult to categorically prove, evidence of the contributory effect of advertising on drinking is significant, and is strengthening.

Econometric studies:

Much debate has been caught up in the argument as to whether a causal relationship can be shown to exist between alcohol advertising and overall alcohol consumption of a population. Advertising and alcohol industry representatives often quote this research. Some studies have been funded by industry sources.

Measuring effect of alcohol advertising by population consumption trends is flawed

There have been many suggestions that measuring the effect of advertising by looking at consumption trends of the whole population are flawed. Reasons include: the complexity of alcohol control policies in various countries, difficulty isolating the effects of advertising, and population dynamics.

Another reason put forward by Saffer (2002), is the concept of diminishing marginal product, which means that, because alcohol is heavily advertised, the marginal effect on increased consumption will be small and difficult to measure.

A literature review conducted for the World Health Organisation (WHO) also found significant flaws in many econometric studies, with data on key variables missing and naive models of advertising effect used (Cooke et al. 2002). These studies are usually related to crude consumption levels and so do not show the impact of alcohol advertising on sub-groups.

For example; although there was no change in volume of alcohol consumed overall between 1995 and 2000 in New Zealand, there were marked increases in the volume consumed among males aged 14-15 years, and even larger increases for males aged 16-17 years from 8 to 20 litres (Habgood et al. 2001).

Cooke et al. (2002) suggest that the slight and inconsistent effect often reported in these studies actually reflects an averaging of minimal influences on older drinkers and larger effects on immature younger drinkers (Aiken and Hastings, 1992).

Small but significant connections.

The overall conclusion of Cooke et al. (2002) was that survey research on alcohol advertising and young people *consistently indicates small but significant connections between exposure to and awareness of alcohol advertising and drinking beliefs and behaviours.*

Studies of the effects of advertising bans

Some studies have attempted to assess the impact of alcohol advertising bans on consumption. Such studies are complicated by the fact that such bans are rarely complete, attract media attention and may be counteracted by transference of advertising to other marketing (Harrison and Godfrey, 1989).

It is also not possible to stop advertising overall from other countries. Results of such studies have been contradictory. However, a major study (Saffer, 1991) of bans implemented in several OECD countries in the 1970.s did show that those countries with bans had *about 16 percent lower alcohol consumption and 23 percent lower number of traffic fatalities than countries with no bans, while those countries with bans only on spirits advertising showed 11 percent lower consumption.* Saffer (1991) points out that is likely that these differences also reflect other changes in these societies, given that the social climate had reached the stage which made a ban possible in the first place.

Studies of young peoples responses to advertising:

Studies of the effects on alcohol advertising on the individual are being given increasing weight. They have been especially useful in showing the impact of advertising on young people. Cooke et als (2002) review for the WHO concludes that: *Many of these studies, in particular more recent studies involving sophisticated methodologies, point to the link between advertising and young people's drinking behaviours. In essence, the more familiar, aware and appealing the advertisement is to targeted groups, the more likely they are to drink now and in the future.*

Evidence of the link between advertising and drinking is strengthening

There is now a significant number of studies, from New Zealand and overseas, which have shown the link between alcohol advertising and the intention to drink, or earlier and heavier drinking: (Casswell and Zhang, 1998), (Atkin et al. 1983), (Grube and Wallack, 1994), to name a few. These have been widely reported elsewhere.

One such study was that of Wyllie et al. (1998), who, in a sample of New Zealand children aged 10-17 years, found that those young people who liked the television advertisements more than others were more likely to say that they would be drinking at least weekly by 20 years old; and among 14-17 year olds, those who expressed the greatest liking for the advertising were also the heaviest drinkers.

Liking of advertisements was linked with the feeling that *drinking makes life more fun and exciting and people get on better together when they've had a few drinks.*

Other qualitative studies have provided insights into children's perceptions of and responses to alcohol advertisements (Aitken et al. 1988), (Casswell, 1995).

Longitudinal studies have demonstrated a correlation between recall of alcohol advertisements and later drinking. For example Connolly et al. (1994) used the Dunedin Childhood Development longitudinal study to demonstrate how recall of advertising at 15 years was significantly related to larger quantities of beer being consumed at 18 years; and those who responded positively to alcohol advertising at age 18 were heavier drinkers and reported more alcohol related aggression at age 21 (Casswell and Zhang, 1998).

Casswell et al. (2002) have shown that these effects now go up to age 26. While amounts, but not frequency of drinking had declined for most of the young people, those who had responded most positively to alcohol advertising at age 18 were the most frequent drinkers at age 26.

Some studies demonstrate the complex dynamics in the relationship between consumers, advertisements and advertiser. Connelly et al (1994), for example, showed how beer drinkers will be drawn towards beer advertising, are more likely to be targeted by beer advertisers, which will in turn reinforce their liking for beer.

12. The Problems with Industry Self-regulation of Advertising.

The current situation is unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

- The codes are irrelevant to many advertisements which nevertheless target, or appeal to, minors.
- The process is reactive; so that the advertisement has already done its job by the time it is removed.
- Advocates for healthy alcohol policy differ sharply with the decisions of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board.
- The process is slow, with Appeal Board decisions taking up to a year.
- The ASCB has no punitive powers, so that the same breaches of the codes are repeated.
- The ASCB will not adjudicate on packaging and other forms of promotion.
- The complaint process is too complex for most of the public to bother.
- The ASCB is controlled by the advertising industry, a vested interest group.
- The process focuses on the content of advertisements, but not on the number of advertisements.

13. Answers to Arguments for Alcohol Advertising.

Alcohol is a legal product so should be able to be advertised.

Alcohol is a legal product for historical reasons. It is a restricted substance and a drug. It is the only mind-altering and addictive substance, which is permitted to be advertised. The harm from it is so great that advertising should not be permitted.

Alcohol advertising does not lead to increased consumption

In the last 3 years alcohol consumption has been rising. The effects of advertising are cumulative, and not necessarily immediate. Total consumption does not indicate changes in consumption by different groups. Teenage drinking has increased, and the onset of drinking has begun at a younger age, since advertising became widespread. The research on the relationship between alcohol advertising is equivocal, due to many variables. The liquor industry is the only one to argue that it spends millions for nil gain.

The purpose of alcohol advertising is only to increase the brand share of the market.

This argument was used for tobacco advertising. We do not believe that liquor companies would spend \$52 million annually just to retain market share. The advertising of each brand is persuasion to drink. (AC Neilson 1999)

Only a small number abuse alcohol. Why should advertising be curtailed on their account?

Alcohol abuse is widespread. Fifty-two per cent of New Zealanders binge drink (ALAC 2004).

Fifty per cent of alcohol is drunk in this way, increasing the likelihood of harm (Habgood et al 2001). At least one third of teenagers abuse alcohol in this way (ALAC 1997).

Forty-four per cent of drinkers experience harm from alcohol in their lifetime (Holibar et al 1997).

An advertising ban would increase the 'forbidden fruit' motive for drinking.

The advertising of alcohol heightens the desire of young people to be grown up and able to access alcohol.

The under 25's are sophisticated and impervious to advertising.

The young are media savvy, but not immune to the subtle persuasion of alcohol advertising, which has been carefully researched and targeted at them.

Advertisers know that children and teenagers are a good market. A major advertising conference in Auckland in 1998 was entitled "Capturing Kids".

Banning alcohol advertising would lead to a surge in illicit drug use.

Banning advertising is not the same as banning alcohol. Young people would still be able to get alcohol, but some of the desire to do so would be removed. Alcohol produces far more harm than illicit drugs, and it is often a gateway for these.

The Bill of Rights provides freedom for commercial speech

The Bill of Rights Act of 1990 provides protection for freedom of expression, including advertising.

The ASA review team of 1998 decided that parliament could over-ride the Bill if it saw fit. Grant Huscroft, University of Auckland Faculty of Law, who considered that the Bill could be over-ridden if the advertising of a product produced substantial public harm, supports this opinion.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by New Zealand, states that parties shall "Encourage development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being."

14. Policy Options

A complete ban on advertising, sponsorship, and promotions.

This has been done for tobacco, with considerable success. An advertising ban for tobacco is estimated to produce a decline of 7 per cent in tobacco consumption. (Saffer and Chaloupka 2000).

To be successful an advertising ban needs to cover all New Zealand controlled media, and ideally to be introduced with other measures to reduce harm.

The main effect of an advertising ban is to change the messages around drinking, thus changing public attitudes (WHO, 1994). The current messages of normalisation and glamourisation, need to be changed to non-acceptance of drunkenness, and acceptability of drinking in reduced amounts.

The liquor industry argues strongly against a total ban, which is an indication of its effectiveness.

A Partial Ban on advertising and sponsorship.

A ban of say broadcast alcohol advertising and sponsorship advertising, would be better than nothing, but may not in itself have a huge impact. The problem with a partial ban is that advertisers would put their energies into other forms of promotion.

A prohibition of all outdoor advertising would help remove the name of products from children's consciousness. Some local bodies have such bans, and should be supported.

Prohibition of advertising for activities which involve young people especially, would be appropriate.

Health and Safety Warnings

These are complementary measures that would add value to an advertising ban and other methods of reducing harm from alcohol. If alcohol advertising continues requiring the placement of these on all alcohol advertisements would help balance the impression that alcohol is problem free.

Removal of tax deductibility for alcohol advertising and sponsorship.

Tax deductibility as a business expense effectively subsidises the advertising of a product which produces serious harm and cost to the community. Further subsidy occurs with TV advertising, due to bulk purchase. On the other hand, a tax on alcohol advertising could go towards health promotion.

Putting the onus of proof of safety and non-appeal of advertisements to minors on to the advertising companies.

At present the situation is the reverse. Health promotion advocates must prove the harm or appeal of an advertisement.

Prohibition of 'image' and 'lifestyle' advertisements

This would make it permissible to advertise factual information relevant to the product eg cost, availability; without glamourising the product.

Increasing health promotion advertisements

At present alcohol advertisements on TV and radio outnumber alcohol health promotion advertisements by 10 to 1. To increase the number and effectiveness of these would be an expensive option, and may lead to further pushing of the boundaries of alcohol advertising, and a compensatory increase in the quantity of advertisements.

Regulating Sponsorship

The extent and funding of sponsorship, by liquor companies and outlets, should be made public. There should be restriction of sponsorship of activities involving people under the age of 18.

Media education in schools

There is a body of opinion that suggests that better understanding of how alcohol advertising works, would help reduce its influence on young people. It places the burden of resistance to advertising on those who are susceptible to it. We do not consider that this would produce major change in behaviour, as other forms of alcohol education have not. (Babor et al 2003)

Regulation by a public body such as the Broadcasting Standards Authority

This would be marginally better than the present system of regulation. The disadvantages are that it only applies to broadcasting, and it is a reactive system, like the ASCB.

Advantages are that it is a government appointed body, thus indirectly answerable to the public, and that it has punitive powers.

A similar body, answerable to the public, and with health promotion advocates on it, who are able to pre-vet advertisements, is a possibility.

15. Obstacles to the Implementation of Healthy Alcohol Policy

Deregulation and the perception of the 'nanny state'.

Broadcast alcohol advertising was permitted as part of the process of deregulation. Although the current climate of opinion is for market regulation, this is showing signs of change. There is widespread acceptance for the regulatory role of the state e.g. for tobacco, dog control, electricity, railways, and water supply. There is also widespread concern about the effects of deregulated industries such as food (obesity) and TV (violence). The public is coming to realise that private enterprises do not necessarily work for the public good.

A ban on advertising would need to be perceived by the public as a restriction on the industries, and not on individual freedom to choose. Over the past 10 years there has been increased permissiveness of liquor legislation, affecting liquor, retail and advertising industries, which have led to the present high level of harm from alcohol in New Zealand. If nothing is done the situation will get worse, producing higher levels of health and social problems, including addiction.

Alcohol perceived as a health product

The health benefits of alcohol to a section of older people in the community has been latched on to and inflated, to give the impression that alcohol has an overall beneficial effect on health. The truth is that small amounts of alcohol, not more than 2 standard drinks per day, are effective in reducing atherosclerosis, and can benefit older people at risk of ischaemic heart disease or ischaemic stroke. There are no proven health benefits for younger people.

Piecemeal legislation and conscience voting in parliament

Alcohol legislation is controlled by a variety of portfolios i.e. health, finance, broadcasting, justice, commerce. This has produced a hotchpotch of laws relating to alcohol. For healthy alcohol legislation to be enacted there should be a special portfolio for it. Legislation should be based on that known to reduce harm (see appendix A, from 'The Globe').

Conscience voting on alcohol issues should be abolished. Individual MP's are liable to vote on their own hunches and experience, rather on what is proven healthy policy. Wining and dining, and lobbying by the liquor industry can't be matched by health promoters, who have the well-being of society at heart, but not the funds of the liquor industry. A recent example was the lowering of the minimum drinking age.

The Smoke Free Environment act was brought in through party voting. It has been a worldwide success story for New Zealand.

The Bill of Rights

As considered above, this could be over ridden.

Financial dependence on sponsorship

This is a major challenge. In the event of a ban Health Council funding would need to be made available, and alcohol sponsorship phased out over several years. From the economic viewpoint, reduced expenditure from alcohol-related harm in the long run could fund replacement sponsorship.

16. Policies of Other Countries

This section is from an Alcohol Healthwatch Briefing Paper, 2003

New Zealand's policy on alcohol advertising is currently at the less restrictive end of the spectrum in comparison with similar countries. A small number of countries ban all alcohol advertising on television and radio, some just on state owned channels, some just for higher alcohol content beverages. Others restrict lifestyle advertisements or require health messages. Some countries have a mixed regulatory system involving requirements by law as well as industry regulation. In Europe, the pressure to conform to uniform trade regulations has restricted the ability of some countries to enact their more comprehensive bans (such as the example of Sweden given below).

Examples of Alcohol Advertising Policies in Comparable Countries:

France: France's controversial Loi Evin was introduced in 1991. It bans television advertising of any drink with an alcohol content of more than 1.2 percent, no alcohol sports sponsorship and restrictions on radio advertising. In 2001 France bowed to pressure from the European commission and industry and agreed to relax the law to exempt international sporting competitions.

Denmark: Television and radio advertisements are not permitted for alcohol over 2.25 percent alcohol content. Other media must not aim advertising at minors.

Sweden: Sweden bans marketing on radio or television, except for low alcohol beer. A 25 year old ban of alcohol advertising in print media ended this year when the Swedish Market Court ruled that it violated European Union Legislation (The Globe, 2003).

Norway: A policy allowing no alcohol advertising, including advertising for goods and services, has also recently come under attack from the European commission. Visiting sports teams must comply with limited advertising; for example on clothing. Promotes sports and sports clubs as alcohol-free zones where children are protected from alcohol marketing.

Switzerland allows no lifestyle advertising

Belgium allows no advertising on state television, or radio, no spirits advertising on commercial channels, and no alcohol advertising on radio

Austria and Ireland, Spain and Finland ban broadcast advertising of higher alcohol products.

France, Spain and Portugal have during the last decade banned alcohol advertisement in the sports arenas.

USA attempts to include health warnings on advertisements and to remove the tax deductibility have been unsuccessful.

Britain: Broadcast advertising is the responsibility of statutory bodies; other media comes under a voluntary code, which limits advertising where more than a quarter of the audience is likely to be under 18.

Netherlands: The Code for Alcohol Beverages covers all forms of advertising including packaging, internets, point of sale material and sponsorship. The code requires 40 percent of alcohol advertising on television to have moderation or warning messages.

Ireland: In response to a surge in alcohol consumption, the government has recently planned legislation to ban advertisements for alcohol on television and radio before 10pm, alcohol advertising on public transport, in youth centres and sports events where underage people are present. It also plans to ban happy hours and has recommended health warnings on alcoholic drinks.

17. Conclusions

Alcohol is severely damaging the health and wellbeing of New Zealand society. Its advertising cannot be justified.

The Group Against Liquor Advertising has as its preferred option, the cessation of alcohol advertising on all New Zealand controlled media, and a phasing out of alcohol sponsorship.

Failing this GALA supports a system of regulation by a statutory body, comprised of a majority of public health advocates, and with pre-vetting and punitive powers.

Other restrictions we wish to see would be:

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