



Gala News

Newsletter No 66 of GALA New Zealand Inc.

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(Group Against Liquor Advertising)

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What GALA stands for: GALA is promoting a community free from liquor advertising and sponsorship. We recognise that liquor is a permanent part of New Zealand society; we are not prohibitionists. We are seeking bans on broadcast liquor advertising and liquor sponsorship. We support health warnings on liquor containers and standard drinks labelling.

Editorial

Culture Clash: Alcohol marketing and public health

Summary of a paper by Geoffrey Munro and Johanna de Wever from the Australian Drug Foundation.

Australia (*like New Zealand-Ed.*) is currently developing a national alcohol strategy. The notion of 'culture' has a central role. Alcohol is a source of enjoyment, part of many social rituals, but too many people participate in 'drunken cultures' rather than 'drinking cultures'. Twenty per cent of the population binge drink at least once a month, 80% of alcohol consumed by underage drinkers is drunk at risky levels.

Recent economic policies have led to greater competition between liquor companies, more outlets, economies of scale, increased advertising and reduced liquor prices. The principal aim of producers and traders is to maximise the return to shareholders. Marketing is crucial to this. 'Marketing mix' is made up of the four Ps, product, price, place and promotion,.

The **product** which is proving most successful commercially is RTDs. They began with an alcohol content of 5%. Some are now being produced with up to 9% alcohol. They are the favoured drink of teenagers and the most rapidly growing section of the market.

The **price** continues to fall in comparison to other commodities. Special discounts, loss leader sales, happy hours etc make getting drunk inexpensive.

The **places** of sale have increased enormously. In Victoria there were 4,000 licensed premises in 1986. Now there are over 17,000. (*In NZ we have one outlet per 225 of population over 15 years- Ed.*)

Promotion includes advertising campaigns in the mass media, sponsorship of sport, major events, on-line and point-of sale promotions. A recent industry article listed 31 ways a retailer could promote alcohol ranging from giveaways, advertising and direct mail, to stunts.

Advertising contributes to increased consumption and harm, but the greatest effect may be to help shape values and attitudes toward alcohol. Thus control of advertising is important and at present does not address public health concerns.

In conclusion an expectation that the alcohol industry might constrain its marketing in order to advance 'healthier drinking cultures' is at odds with its performance. There is no requirement for alcohol producers or distributors to consider the impact of their product. It would contradict the commercial imperative, ignore the shareholder's interest and offend the operation of the free market. It is difficult for the industry and the health sector to find common ground. The aim of a successful alcohol strategy is to reduce intoxication, which must reduce consumption levels. Such a strategy would impact on customs, values, images and norms that contribute to Australia's unsafe drinking cultures.

NZ NATIONAL ALCOHOL ACTION PLAN

An action plan to flesh out the National Alcohol Strategy is under way. Five advisory groups have been established. On behalf of GALA Dr Viola Palmer participated in the public health and social issues advisory group, together with other public health representatives. Other groups are: law enforcement, research, treatment and industry.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE ALCOHOL ADVERTISING BILLS GONE ?

The Government Bill resulting from the advertising review is currently being drafted into law. We are uncertain as to whether this will be further debated in the House, or whether it will be passed by Cabinet regulation.

The Green's Bill to ban TV and radio alcohol advertising is still on the order paper.

Keep those letters in support of this Bill going. It is a good time to remind MPs that 44% of New Zealanders want TV and radio alcohol advertising banned. (Research by Prof. Janet Hoek, Massey University.)

ALCOHOL RECLASSIFIED ?

Professor Doug Sellman from the National Addiction Centre, School of Medicine, Christchurch and colleagues have researched the impact of alcohol. They suggest that alcohol should be reappraised in relation to the Misuse of Drugs Act (1975). On the six-risk criteria applied, alcohol has a high ability to create dependence, a high likelihood of widespread use and abuse, a high risk to public health, a high risk of death and serious toxic effects to the brain and other organs of the body.

They state that it would fit into Class B restricted drugs alongside morphine, pethidine and Fantasy. "This would contribute to a more objective perspective on alcohol" said Professor Sellman.

Imagine a society in which these three drugs were widely available for purchase and their use encouraged by advertising and sponsorship. Sports teams courtesy of morphine?

THE NUB OF THE PROBLEM

"A conscience vote by Parliament has liberalised the availability of alcohol since the early 1990s. This is consistent with a philosophy that alcohol should be treated like any other commodity in a free market. The opposing view is that alcohol should be treated differently from other products, considering the harm to drinkers themselves and to the wider community There is a tension between the free market and public health/harm reduction philosophies and decisions about government alcohol policies are highly philosophical."

Extract from a letter from Hon D O'Connor to M Gallagher MP. 29 Jan 2008-02-27

The fact that conscience voting is applied to alcohol shows that it is not regarded as an ordinary commodity. Perhaps Prof Sellman's suggested reclassification will remove any doubts. It is time alcohol was treated for what it is, going by the evidence, and policies made accordingly. Ed

NEW ZEALAND TELEVISION AWASH WITH ALCOHOL IMAGES

Alcohol imagery appears on a wide range of visual material including films, music videos, advertising and other televised programmes. During 98 hours of prime time viewing on 4 free-to-air channels in one week in 2004, the researchers examined the extent and nature of alcohol imagery on NZ television.

Over the week there were 648 separate depictions of alcohol, one every 9 minutes. Most depictions were neutral or positive, only 8% had imagery critical of alcohol use.

They concluded that there was a pervasive amount of alcohol imagery on NZ television. The alcohol ads constituted only 1% of these, but 4% of all ads used alcohol to sell non-alcohol products.

A person viewing TV daily from 6.00 to 9.30pm for a week would be exposed on average to 149 positive messages about alcohol. Ed.

McGee, Rob and Ketchel, Juanita. Dunedin School of Medicine, Otago

ALCOHOL AND YOUTH CRIME

Both major political parties have underlined the problem of youth crime and brought out policies to try to deal with it. Both parties have overlooked the part which alcohol plays. Between 80 and 90% of violent crime is committed under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, with alcohol predominating. The great majority of other youth crimes are also alcohol-related. Furthermore drunk youth are often the victims of crime.

Recent Canadian research has found that almost a quarter of youthful offenders are brain damaged from maternal drinking during pregnancy.(1)

Are politicians again going to pussy-foot around the causative issues?

(1) Fast DK, Conry JL, Loock CA. Identifying fetal alcohol syndrome among youth in the criminal justice system. J.of developmental and Behavioural Pediatrics, 20, (5), 370-372

THE ECONOMICS OF ALCOHOL

The economic impact of alcohol abuse in NZ lowers the effective GDP by about 1%.

It costs between \$5 and \$10 to get drunk nowadays.

Easton B, Globalisation and the Wealth of Nations 2007

In the UK alcohol costs 54% less in real terms than in 1980.

Statement from the Royal College of Physicians

PUBLIC HEALTH BILL

This bill had its first reading last December and is now being considered by Select Committee. Submissions close on March 7. The Bill up-dates the present Public Health Act by focussing on non-communicable diseases as well as the traditional communicable (infectious) diseases. The former are now the main cause of ill-health in our society. They include heart disease, diabetes, cancer and addictions. The Bill opens the door to the possibility of the Governor-General or the Director-General of Health regulating products or activities which are injurious to the public's health. The Bill may be seen on www.parliament.govt.nz . Go to 'Legislation' and search for Public Health Bill.

GALA has made a submission to the Bill which may be seen on our website www.gala.org.nz

We urge you to encourage your MP to support the clauses of the Bill (no's 81, 83 and sub-clause 374 (r) and (x)). These give regulatory powers, at least in theory, to the Governor-General and the Director-General of Health. For example the D-G would be able to prevent the sale of new harmful products.

WHAT ONE PERSON CAN DO

One of our supporters photocopied an article "Of course it's the drinking' by Roger Brooking, from the NZ Listener Jan 12 and sent it with a covering letter to 70 MPs. He has had some interesting replies. Barabara Stewart, NZ First, has had a series of pertinent questions for Minister O'Connor.

AGM

Yes it is AGM time again. Usually a short and pleasant occasion. To be held on Thursday April 24 at 3pm at the Friends' Centre, 115 Mt Eden Rd, Auckland.

It will begin with afternoon tea.