



GALA

NEWSLETTER

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.

Annual Report of GALA for 2007/2008

The AGM report was prepared and presented by Dr Viola Palmer, Chairperson of GALA in April 2008. A full copy is available on request.

She remarked on how well the committee had run and summarized the work during the year, during which time much work had been done to enlighten the public and politicians on the problems of alcohol advertising. Submissions have been made on the inquiry into Obesity and type 2 diabetes, to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand on pregnancy health advisory labels on alcohol containers, and participated in this discussion on national alcohol strategy run by the Ministry of health.

Opportunities had been taken to speak on the radio and to address the 'Two nations, Ten Cultures' conference on alcohol promotion. Several complaints on alcohol advertising had been made of which three of seven had been upheld. Appeals have been launched against two of those that were not upheld.

Good contact had been made with many groups and individuals, the website had been maintained and there have been three newsletters.

Two private members bills on alcohol are waiting to be heard in parliament although the government seems to have a go slow policy on getting these through the system. The early part of the year was taken up in responding to the unsatisfactory outcome of the steering group reviewing alcohol advertising. Their recommendations were accepted by the government but still have not been implemented. There is still much to be done to get a healthy alcohol policy established in New Zealand.

Dr Palmer noted that she was standing down as Chairperson of GALA. She reviewed the progress GALA had made over the last 15 years. GALA had been formed in 1992 following the wave of enthusiasm after tobacco advertising was banned. Unfortunately the public health gains from banning tobacco advertising have been eroded by the increased success of the industry. The obstacles to success by GALA are many. These include the economic power of the alcohol industry and its advocates, the lack of willingness of the media to examine the effects of advertising (as most of them profit from it), the lack of political will, conscience voting in parliament, blaming the individual (and his or her parents) for risky drinking and last but not least the love affair of New Zealanders with alcohol. This is a closed circuit which is reinforced by promotions and only broken when personal tragedy strikes.

In order to overcome these considerable obstacles there needs to be a change of attitudes. It is just not the way we are drinking. Total alcohol consumption needs to drop. There needs to be better cooperation between government authorities and non-government groups and all those working for healthy alcohol policy. The industry because of self-interest has no role in developing alcohol policy. They will fight any restrictions on the large concessions they have gained in the past years.

It is more important than ever that GALA continues the work to prevent these frequent youthful tragedies and ruination of lives. There is still much to do.

During the AGM, Mrs Judy McAnulty was elected as Chairperson and all executive members were reappointed as well as 3 new members, not all of whom can attend every meeting

Several attendees spoke of the very significant contribution that Dr Palmer had made to GALA over the many years. She always carried out the lion's share of the work and provided understanding leadership and a commitment that was remarkable. Her influence of alcohol policy had been considerable and although GALA had not been able to achieve all its objects there is no doubt that it has modified alcohol advertising and drawn the public to the excesses of alcohol promotion. She will be greatly missed from GALA and it was hoped that she would be able to still have input from the sidelines. It is with great personal sadness that she was being farewelled and all wished her the very best for the future. A vote of thanks was carried with acclamation. Subsequently, a presentation of a book and certificate was forwarded to her.

GALA DEVELOPMENTS

In July 2008, Mrs Judy McAnulty resigned from the Chairmanship of GALA and the Executive. As at the time of writing a replacement Chairman has not been appointed.

There is an urgent need for strengthening of the Executive to enable GALA to continue. Supporters of GALA living in the Auckland region are invited to contact us if you could be interested in joining the Executive group. We would also welcome corresponding members from other areas, particularly Wellington.

MEDIA WATCHDOG GROUP FORMED

A new media advocacy group which has a particular concern about new digital media like video games, the Internet and mobile telephony as they effect the behaviour of young people, was launched in Lower Hutt.

Called Media Matters, it was formerly "Viewers for Television Excellence" but has widened its brief because of the rapid expansion of new technologies.

"The media regulatory landscape in NZ is a wild and woolly west" says the president of the new group John Terris. "We have the least regulated system in the world, and a half a dozen groups like the Press Council and the Broadcasting Standards Authority, each with differing responsibilities, all applying different guidelines and operating under different pieces of legislation".

A good example of this media mayhem is the clearance by the film censor of a video game which depicts a young man on a killing spree and having sex with a prostitute. Grand Theft

Auto IV has been allowed into the country with a R18 classification.

This is derisory when you consider that because of its portability, the game will be freely available to children in any home with access to the necessary playback device.

Other jurisdictions like the UK, Canada and Australia all have, in the last five years, introduced much stricter controls especially on the Internet, but in NZ, by contrast, Supreme Court Judges and School Principals access porn on their work computers with impunity.

"Media Matters" is not about suppressing the free flow of information, but about protecting our more vulnerable kids from coming to believe that porn fantasies are what fulfilling sex is about and that violence is a solution to problems.

Text bullying, and paedophiles and rapists using the Internet to groom their victims, are all aspects of children's lives which they have a right to expect society will protect them from.

The new group kicked off with a Forum which

included the Minister of Broadcasting local MP Trevor Mallard, Sue Kedgley, (Green), Chris Finlayson, (Nat.) and Gordon Copeland (Ind.).

“By and large the politicians appear to have the view that if they ignore the problem it will go away. They can afford indifference because the very people who would be affected by any change, the media themselves, refuse to admit any debate on the matter because they want to keep the status quo where they can get away with pretty much anything they please.”

This seems to be a good innovation as GALA is also concerned with the ways the alcohol industry is using new forms of the electronic media to promote alcohol, and hence violence and crime. Perhaps we should work more closely with them?

TERTIARY STUDENT HAZARDOUS DRINKING - RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM, 8 APRIL 2008

Mrs Judy McAnulty attended this symposium on behalf of GALA. Details on the papers delivered can be found at

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/ipru/Publications/Publications.html>

SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL VISITS TO BREWERIES

Did you know that secondary schools send groups of students to visit Lion Nathan breweries in Auckland as an ‘educational’ visit? One of the students who attended said “it was all about marketing.” What goes on in your area ‘below the radar’? Should schools be permitted to do this?

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR AREA?

We are always interested to hear from members of anything related to alcohol promotion in your local area. Keep us informed of your concerns.

RUGBY CLUBS

Rugby Clubs have been contacted to reduce their use of alcohol industry sponsored field flags and goal protectors on fields where young people play. This custom is widespread and members are encouraged to write to their local rugby club and suggest alternative approaches. A recent scientific article entitled “Alcohol industry

sponsorship and hazardous drinking among sportspeople “ by Kerry O’Brien and Kypros Kypri of the University of Otago and the University of Manchester summarises the situation by stating :

“Alcohol industry sponsorship of sportspeople, and in particular, the provision of free or discounted alcoholic beverages, is associated with hazardous drinking after adjustment for a range of potential confounders. Sports administration bodies should consider the health and ethical risks of accepting alcohol industry sponsorship.”

WARNING LABELS ON ALCOHOL

This is still an objective of GALA. At the very least we would like to see pregnancy warning labels on all alcohol beverages. This is being considered by the Food Authority of New Zealand and Australia but progress is glacial slow.

Other countries are moving faster as the problems of excessive alcohol consumption are so large that Governments are being forced to make major moves to improve the situation. The UK is particularly affected.

PUBLICITY

It is good to see the major newspapers are more commonly presenting articles on the problems of alcohol in the community. Please encourage your local papers to continue doing this and keep up your ‘Letters to the Editor’. We are trying to create a groundswell of opposition to the excesses of the alcohol industry and to do this we really need your help. One senses that there is developing in the public a greater awareness of the “elephant we have in the house.” For instance more and more councils, frustrated by the weak alcohol laws, are placing ‘liquor bans’ in place on all sorts of occasions.

TO DO

- 1 Write that letter to the Editor
2. Lobby your sports Clubs and local politicians.
3. Congratulate Editors of newspapers and magazines for any articles on alcohol problems
- 4 Think about helping GALA on the administrative side.

PARLIAMENTARY BILLS

There are several things on the go at the moment so keep watching the newspapers for information.

1. Sale of Liquor (Objections to Applications) Amendment Bill 230-1 (George Hawkins Bill)

This Bill seeks to amend the Sale of Liquor Act 1989 to make wider provision for objections to applications for on-licences and off-licences. The Bill allows any person to object to an application. However, the objector must be able to provide evidence of adverse impact on the objector if the application were to be granted.

This Bill has already passed its first reading and submissions to the Social Services Comm. have closed. Fewer licensed premises means less exposure of young people to alcohol advertising and marketing – especially from venues they frequent such as the local dairy.

2. Sale and Supply of Liquor and Liquor Enforcement Bill 254-1

This bill was introduced to parliament on the 6 August 2008 by Lianne Dalziel.

Part 6A is entitled 'Advertising and Promotions'.

The principles of this Part are that—

- (a) liquor advertising and liquor promotion should not be inconsistent with the promotion of responsibility and moderation in the consumption of alcohol; and
- (b) the overall exposure of children and people under the age of 18 years to liquor advertising and liquor promotion should be minimised; and
- (c) liquor advertising and liquor promotion should not hold strong appeal to children or young people.

Part 6B is involved with giving authority to an advisory body that will be responsible for developing, reviewing, administering and monitoring codes. Agencies producing advertising or promotions that are, or are likely to, breach the code can be issued with a cease and desist order which is enforceable with a fine. Apart from the possibility of a fine it would appear that the system suggested is little different to the current regime.

This has not had its first reading and as yet we do not know the process for submissions or whether it will get through in time for the election.

3. Review of the Sale & Supply of Liquor

The Law Commission will undertake a comprehensive two-and-a-half year review of New Zealand's liquor laws to bring them into line with current community behaviours and concerns around the use of alcohol, Associate Justice Minister Lianne Dalziel announced on 6th August.

The Law Commission's brief includes looking at alcohol advertising. They are to prepare an issues paper for publication and take submissions on it, and to engage in extensive public consultation. Watch out for submission dates.

4. National Alcohol Action Plan

This has been released very recently. Two of our members took part in the advisory groups last year. We know that the Hawkins Bill will be looked at in conjunction with the Government Bill. However, they are both subject to election year conditions.

The Review has a 2 1/2 - 3 year timeframe.

It is good to see some action, even if it is slow, by our politicians. We should encourage them to move more rapidly and each member can do this by lobbying your local politicians, especially in this election year.

