

Alcohol Harm¹

Introduction

The following is a position statement on alcohol harm prepared by Population Health for the Waikato District Health Board (Waikato DHB).

The Waikato District Health Board's position

The Waikato DHB is committed to working with other agencies to reduce alcohol related harm and investing health promotion resources into communities suffering from disproportionate alcohol harm.

The Waikato DHB acknowledges the negative impacts on health that arise from current patterns of alcohol consumption among the population. These include; violence towards others, road and pedestrian crash injuries, impact on employment and education, foetal alcohol syndrome, chronic liver disease, cancer, high blood pressure, fertility problems, neurological disorders and mental health problemsⁱ. The Waikato DHB also recognises that the adverse health incomes resulting from alcohol use are not distributed equally amongst the population. The New Zealand health survey states that 39.2 percent of Maori and Pacific people are drinking hazardously. While 20.1 percent of European/Other people and 9.4 percent of Asian people are drinking hazardouslyⁱⁱ.

Background information: Alcohol harm

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug in New Zealand with 88% of men and 83% of women reporting themselves as drinkersⁱⁱⁱ. Despite this it is New Zealand's binge drinking culture that is the most pressing problem. Approximately 1.2 million drinkers in New Zealand think binge drinking is acceptable and regularly participate in binge drinkingⁱⁱⁱ. It has been estimated that alcohol costs the government between one and four billion dollars annually with \$1.17 billion a year lost from productivity in the workplace.

Youth drinking is considered to be a problem in New Zealand with 125,000 teenagers under the age of 17 falling into the category of binge drinking. The groups most likely to drink heavily are males aged 18 – 24 and Māori males aged 18 – 30^{iv}.

ⁱ Alcohol concern, (2006) *Alcohol concern: Fact sheet health impacts of alcohol*. Retrieved July 10, 2009 from http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/files/20060320_121128_Health%20effects%20pullout%20version%203%20March%202006.pdf

ⁱⁱ Ministry of health (2008). A portrait of health. Key results of the 2006/2007 New Zealand Health Survey. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

ⁱⁱⁱ ALAC. (n.d.). It's just a drink. Retrieved June 8, 2009, from the 'ALAC' website: <http://www.alcohol.org.nz/CampaignItsNotTheDrinking.aspx>

^{iv} Public Health Association of New Zealand. (2000). Public Health Association policy on alcohol. Retrieved June 8, 2009, from the 'Public Health Association' website: <http://www.pha.org.nz/keydocs.html>

¹ It is not the intention of this position statement to act as a submission to the Law Commission Review paper. This position statement has been developed in relevance to the current legislation and is subject to review depending on the final outcome of the Law Commission paper.

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