



24 March 2022

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Tēnā koe e te Minita,

The Public Health Association of New Zealand (PHANZ) is writing this letter to support your comments on the benefits of reviewing the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act to ensure that it is fit for its purpose and operates effectively.

PHANZ is a national association with members from the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Our vision is 'Hauora mō te katoa – oranga mō te Ao' or 'Good health for all – health equity in Aotearoa'. To achieve this, we provide a forum for information and debate about public health in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our organisation includes a wide membership across New Zealand and has a Māori Caucus, a Pacific Caucus, and an Asian Caucus. Through these forums, our collective public health action aims to improve, promote, and protect the whole population's health through organised events, resources, and collaboration with stakeholder partners. As part of our work to prevent ill health and promote wellbeing, we will be targeting the commercial determinants of health (including alcohol, tobacco and sugar) as a campaign leading up to the next election. We recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi as Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, defining respectful relationships between tāngata whenua and tāngata Tiriti. We actively support the Tiriti o Waitangi articles in policy and legislation.

Despite the current Act, alcohol misuse and harm in New Zealand is too high. One in five New Zealanders over the age of 15 years are hazardous drinkers and more than 800 New Zealanders will die each year from alcohol (1). Alcohol is a major contributor to family violence, violent offending, road crashes and fatalities (2,3). It is estimated that 1-3% of babies each year are born with the life-long effects of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder caused by maternal alcohol use (4,5). Alcohol is also a major factor in suicide, with 31% of

those that committed suicide in 2017 found to have alcohol in their system (6,7). Mental health issues can be exacerbated by alcohol use, and alcohol misuse can worsen mental health. Therefore, it should be plain to see the many reasons for New Zealanders to be drinking less alcohol and the need to find more ways to approach the issue, including our Tiriti relationship.

In New Zealand, the effects of alcohol misuse and harm disproportionately affect Māori and those in the most deprived communities. Alcohol kills 2.5 times more Māori than non-Māori, and hazardous drinking is higher in both Māori men and particularly Māori women compared to non-Māori (1). There is a known relationship between alcohol outlets and harm, and the greatest volume of alcohol outlets are found in the most deprived areas (8,9). Many communities have advocated for reducing the number of alcohol outlets being built in their area but have found this process to be challenging for several reasons. One major reason is due to the current appeals process. Astonishingly, our supermarket duopoly has appealed nearly 9 out of 10 draft local alcohol policies, whilst bottle stores have appealed about 7 out of 10 policies (10). People must be put first over profits, especially as inequities in alcohol misuse will likely worsen over time. We would like your review to enable both Tiriti Article 3 equitable outcomes and Article 2 tino rangatiratanga approaches to the issue for Māori.

Alcohol-related harm will not improve on its own. It should therefore be obvious that the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 is not fit for its purpose and a comprehensive review is required. We encourage the minister to conduct this review, ensuring that the main drivers of alcohol use in New Zealand are thoroughly investigated i.e., the low price of alcohol, its high availability, and pervasive advertising and sponsorship (11). One area where alcohol advertising does not belong is in sport. PHANZ has been a strong advocate for the removal of all sports sponsorship associated with alcohol ([read here](#)). As always in public health, we urge you to think of alcohol legislation as the fence at the top of the cliff and not the ambulance at the bottom.

We need up-to-date, evidence-based, tiriti aligned laws on alcohol and other commercial determinants of health that put our people first. We encourage you to uphold your [comments](#) about the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 and we urge you to follow through with a comprehensive review.

Ngā mihi nui,

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