



The New Zealand Psychological Society

*Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa*

**Submission to the Ministerial Forum**

**on**

**Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship**

**on behalf of**

**The New Zealand Psychological Society**

**28 April, 2014**

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If this submission is made on behalf of an organisation, please name that organisation here:	The New Zealand Psychological Society
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Please provide a brief description of your organisation (if applicable):	The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has over 1500 members and subscribers and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology.

The NZPsS **gives permission** for the details above to be released under the Official Information Act 1962.

The NZPsS also **gives permission** for our name to be listed in the published summary of submissions.

## **Introduction**

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) supports further reductions on alcohol advertising and sponsorship (over and above those currently in place) to reduce alcohol-related harm. The Society is aware that for many people alcohol plays an important and enjoyable part in their socialising and leisure time when it is consumed in moderation. We are aware however that alcohol is a toxic substance which can result in acute and chronic physical damage, psychomotor impairment and emotional and behavioural changes. Alcohol can impair judgement and increase the risk of harm to the consumer and to others including unborn children (e.g. foetal alcohol spectrum disorder). Many psychologists work with individuals and families who on a daily basis cope with the results of the consumption and misuse of alcohol. We represent their views gained from a breadth of experience in working with individuals and families who have suffered from the effects of alcohol.

## **Supporting further restrictions on alcohol advertising**

The NZPsS supports further restrictions on alcohol advertising because in our view there is sufficient evidence that advertising not only encourages consumption of alcohol but also transmits cultural messages in which alcohol is viewed as “a rite of passage” particularly among young people.

We are concerned about the many psychosocial harms related to alcohol. Of particular concern are

- The risks of drinking during pregnancy which may result in the birth of children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder
- Child abuse and neglect resulting from caregiver intoxication
- Domestic violence which is exacerbated by the intoxication of male partners in particular
- Physical and sexual violence
- Aggravation of existing mental health disorders
- Lost educational and occupational potential
- Alcohol dependency

We note also that as well as the psychosocial, physical and financial burden of alcohol consumption, there is also a burden of mortality. Between 600 and 800

people in New Zealand have been estimated to die each year from alcohol-related causes (Berl 2009; Connor et al).<sup>1</sup>

### **Evidence to support our view**

We acknowledge that some research has failed to find a link between alcohol marketing and patterns of consumption. However there is a large body of research that does support this link and we (and presumably advertisers, sponsors and marketing agents) find this evidence persuasive. We quote from a number of these studies below.

### **Impact on younger people**

*“Evidence shows that exposure of young people to alcohol marketing speeds up the onset of drinking and increases the amount consumed by those already drinking. The extent of research available is considerable and shows effects consistently with young people. Marketing contributes undoubtedly to the ongoing recruitment of young people to replace older drinkers and to expand the drinking population in emerging markets”.*

**Alcohol and Public Policy Group (2010). Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity – a summary of the second edition, *Addiction*, 105, 769–779**

*“This review identified thirteen longitudinal studies that have investigated the relationship between adolescent exposure to alcohol advertising and promotion and drinking. Twelve of the thirteen studies found evidence that such exposure predicts both the onset of drinking amongst non-drinkers and increased consumption amongst existing drinkers”.*

**Myers, B. and Parry, C. (2013). Re-examining the evidence for a total ban on alcohol advertising in South Africa, *South African Journal of Psychology*, 43 (4) 402-405**

*“... exposure to some of these types of alcohol advertisements [advertisements on television, in newspapers, billboards, posters etc] was associated with increased alcohol consumption, with differences by age and gender. The results are consistent with studies from other countries and suggest that exposure to alcohol advertisements among Australian adolescents is strongly associated with drinking patterns”.*

**Jones, S. and Magee, C. (2011). Exposure of alcohol advertising and alcohol consumption among Australian adolescents, *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, Vol 46 (5) 630-637**

*“Among youth, alcohol advertising ‘has been found to promote and reinforce perceptions of drinking as positive, glamorous, and relatively risk free’, all of which encourage a higher consumption of alcohol, often well before the legal age of purchase”.*

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<sup>1</sup> Report to: Ministry of Health and ACC costs of harmful alcohol and other drug use- Final Report Prepared by Adrian Slack et al July 2009

Heung, C. et al. (2012). Strengthening the Canadian Alcohol Advertising Regulatory System, *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 263-266

*“Longitudinal studies and recent systematic reviews now contribute considerable support for causal links, and have been instrumental in generating a growing scientific consensus that advertising in the traditional media influences drinking initiation, levels of consumption and drinking patterns in young people. This is an important step in refuting arguments that marketing influences brand share but not total consumption”.*

**Meir, P. (2010). Alcohol marketing research: the need for a new agenda, *Addiction*, 106 466-471**

*“Longitudinal studies consistently suggest that exposure to media and commercial communications on alcohol is associated with the likelihood that adolescents will start to drink alcohol, and with increased drinking amongst baseline drinkers. Based on the strength of this association, the consistency of findings across numerous observational studies, temporality of exposure and drinking behaviours observed, dose-response relationships, as well as the theoretical plausibility regarding the impact of media exposure and commercial communications, we conclude that alcohol advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to use alcohol, and to drink more if they are already using alcohol”.*

**Anderson, P. et al. (2009). Impact of alcohol advertising and media exposure on adolescent alcohol use: a systematic review of longitudinal studies, *Alcohol*, 44(3):229-43**

### **Impact of alcohol advertising on constructions of masculinity**

*“Messages that promote a hegemonic masculinity associated with traditional macho male values that marginalize and objectify women and others are problematic for the prevention of domestic violence.*

*There are concerning indications that contemporary marketing techniques are being employed to embed problematic masculinities in social practices through the use of humour, fun events and through the internet using social networking sites”.*

**Towns, A. et al. (2011). Constructions of masculinity in alcohol advertising: Implications for the prevention of domestic violence, *Addiction Research and Theory*, 20 (5): 389-401**

### **Alcohol availability and target advertising**

Research suggests that alcohol availability and advertising are disproportionately concentrated in racial/ethnic minority communities. Alcohol outlets use storefronts and the interiors of outlets to advertise alcohol products which impact on the number of alcohol related problems in minority communities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alinz, M. (1998). Alcohol Availability and Targeted Advertising in Racial/Ethnic Minority Communities, *Alcohol Health & Research World* Vol 22 (4)

## **Do you think that the available evidence is strong enough for changes to be made now?**

We are in no doubt that the research evidence from reputable journals (some of which is cited above) is strong enough to inform policy. This evidence clearly points to the link between advertising and consumption patterns.

### **Sponsorship**

We support further restrictions on alcohol sponsorship to reduce alcohol related harm.

### **What reasons do you have for your view?**

Commercial sponsorship typically involves the payment of a fee or the provision of goods or services in return for access to commercial exposure. Sponsorship is a form of marketing which takes advantage of courtesy status (i.e. the status that is derived by having a product associated with a highly valued activity, e.g. sport and/or high status individuals or groups). This form of advertising frequently takes advantage of exposure and access to particular market segments e.g. promoting alcohol products to younger people.

As sponsorship is a form of marketing albeit less direct than other forms and we believe that many of the research findings associated with direct marketing have relevance for sponsorship.

Below are some direct quotes from research which has found a relationship between alcohol sponsorship and the increased consumption of alcohol.

*“The primary finding [of this research] that receipt of alcohol industry sponsorship is associated with increased drinking in Australian sports people is important because it supports initial findings from New Zealand (O’Brien and Kypri, 2008), and conflicts with the claim by the alcohol industry and sports marketers that this form of sponsorship was unique to New Zealand” (Glendinning, 2008).*

(The authors note in terms of confounders that...” we cannot completely discount the possibility that heavier drinkers sought out alcohol sponsorship” but suggest that governmental regulation of alcohol industry sponsorship and advertising in sport may be warranted.)

**O’Brien, K. (2011). Alcohol Industry and Non-Alcohol Industry Sponsorship of Sportspeople and Drinking *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, Vol. 46, No. 2: 210–213**

*“The present work is the first to examine associations between receipt of alcohol industry sponsorship in sports people/athletes and alcohol-related aggressive and antisocial behaviour. Alcohol industry sponsorship was associated with increased rates of receiving aggression, but AUDIT-C scores [an alcohol screening instrument] and the gender of the sports people were more important factors in most of the other aggressive and antisocial behaviours examined here”.*

**Kerry, S. et al. (2012). Alcohol industry sponsorship and alcohol-related harms in Australian university sportspeople/athletes, *Drug and Alcohol Review* doi: 10.1093/alcalc/agq095 \ : 1-4**

*“Service of alcohol to intoxicated people, happy hour promotions (where alcohol is provided at a discounted rate for a defined period of time) and alcohol-only awards or prizes were found to be associated with club members being more than twice as likely to consume alcohol to excess. These findings confirm the need and the opportunity for the development and implementation of alcohol harm reduction interventions in these settings”.*

**Kingsland, M. et al. (2013) Alcohol consumption and sport: a cross-sectional study of alcohol management practices associated with at-risk alcohol consumption at community football clubs, *BMC Public Health*, Vol 13:762**

**Do you think the available evidence is strong enough for changes to be made now?**

Yes, we think that the available evidence is strong enough for changes to be made now. Even if the evidence for a connection between alcohol advertising/sponsorship and alcohol related harm in some research is equivocal, there is a reputable body of research which points to a harmful connection between advertising/sponsorship and alcohol consumption.

**If further restrictions to alcohol advertising and sponsorship are necessary, what do you think should be done?**

### **ASA Code for Advertising Liquor**

The current Advertising Standards Authority *Code for Advertising Liquor* fails in our view to take into account the ways in which alcohol marketing and sponsorship can indirectly influence perceptions and behaviours whilst appearing to adhere to the code. For example young people seeing logos of brands of alcohol on the shirts of rugby players they admire are being exposed to advertising. This in our view is contrary to Principle 4 (3) of the Code *“Liquor advertisements shall not use or refer to identifiable heroes or heroines of the young”*. The Code needs to reflect the

pervasiveness, subtlety and complexity of alcohol advertising and the rapid changes occurring in social media and communication technology.

In summary we recommend that the Code be urgently updated and that those developing the new Code access research on the psychology of marketing to ensure that the Code reflects the reality of the impact of marketing on the public. This will no doubt be the same or similar research to that which informs marketers' decisions aimed at influencing consumer choice and consumption of alcohol products.

### **The phasing out of sponsorship**

In our view advertising of products needs to emphasise the promotion of health, physical activity, personal wellbeing and healthy relationships.

We believe that sponsorship of sport by alcohol companies is inconsistent with the above and should be phased out, with sporting and recreational organisations/clubs being encouraged and assisted to source socially responsible sponsorship and alternative funding (i.e. sponsorship which promotes health and wellbeing).

### **Marketing**

Given the harm caused by alcohol the NZPsS believes that sanctions similar to those applied to cigarette marketing needs to apply to alcohol. Based on the evidence presented above, the volume of marketing and promotion of alcohol needs to be limited particularly in situations where children and young people are exposed to this marketing. The content of marketing also needs to be vetted for messages which promote a construction of masculinity which marginalize and objectify women and others. Promoting alcohol to young men as a "rite of passage" also needs to cease. Continuing research into the extent and impact of online and digital marketing, and the effectiveness of different regulatory approaches to marketing (and sponsorship) needs to occur.

### **How would these proposed restrictions work in practice to reduce alcohol-related harm (e.g. crime, disorder, negative public outcomes)?**

The research above is clear on the outcomes of marketing of alcohol and the restrictions outlined above will assist to address these issues. Research and

evaluation needs to occur to look at how best to curb marketing and sponsorship to assist in addressing excessive consumption.

### **What evidence is available that your proposal will work?**

As we have shown in our submission there is substantial evidence that the marketing/sponsorship of alcohol contributes to problematic consumption. It is reasonable to assume on the basis of this evidence that the suggestions we put forward will have a positive impact. Policy and legislation have been very effective in reducing cigarette smoking particularly amongst young people and is likely to have a similar effect in relation to alcohol.

### **What other interventions could potentially be tried in the future?**

Research is required to determine the different ways in which marketing and sponsorship of alcohol impact on Māori, Pasifika, Asian, Pakeha, European and other cultural groups in New Zealand. The diverse, harmful impacts of marketing and sponsorship in relation to alcohol need to be well understood and responded to.

We agree with following statement

*“The lack of understanding of how different population groups respond to marketing and to market restrictions prevents us from devising target interventions and hampers scientists’ ability to inform policy decision-making”.*

**Meir, P. (2010). Alcohol marketing research: the need for a new agenda, *Addiction* 106, 466-471**

### **Why should these other interventions be considered?**

The issues raised above are contextual and we need to acknowledge this by generating New Zealand evidence.

### **Who would be affected by your proposals to restrict alcohol advertising and how?**

Those that produce, market and sell alcohol will be financially affected by restrictions on marketing. It is hoped that those who consume alcohol and those who are negatively impacted by the wide ranging repercussions of excessive alcohol consumption, will experience an amelioration of these impacts. Taxpayers who fund the many health, justice, welfare and other costs of excessive alcohol consumption



will overtime benefit from a reduction in such costs. Those relying on sponsorship money from alcohol companies will need to be assisted and supported to find alternative forms of income as note above. The Government will receive less excise tax from alcohol but this we suggest would be offset by a reduction in health, justice and welfare costs.

**What ongoing and emerging challenges does the Forum need to take into account when considering whether further restrictions on alcohol advertising and sponsorship (e.g. sporting, cultural and other events) are necessary to reduce alcohol-related harm?**

The Government is likely to come under considerable pressure from alcohol producers, importers and retailers and those in the hospitality industry not to further restrict alcohol advertising and sponsorship. The Forum also needs to take into account the likely impacts on this issue of the Trans-Pacific Partnership should this come into effect. There is also likely to be resistance to a total ban on marketing and a call for voluntary self-regulation from a number of quarters. This latter option should be resisted. As noted below

*“Although the evidence is limited by the relative lack of research, it is likely that a total ban on the full range of marketing practices could affect drinking by young people, particularly if diversion of the promotional spending to other channels were blocked. There is no evidence that the alcohol industry’s favoured alternative to marketing restrictions—voluntary self-regulation—protects vulnerable populations from exposure to alcohol advertising and other marketing practices”.*

**Alcohol and Public Policy Group. (2010). Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity – a summary of the second edition, *Addiction*, 105, 769–779**

**What action if any, could be taken to address these matters?**

The action that needs to be taken is clear. The Society would like to see policy makers and legislators acknowledge that marketing and sponsorship contribute to the harm that alcohol is causing (as cited in the evidence presented above). There is an urgent need to ensure that children and young people in particular are protected from the marketing of a product that negatively impacts on their wellbeing. Young people need to be protected from marketing/sponsorship which normalizes an excessive drinking culture which promises social acceptance and a sense of belonging. Policy makers and legislators need to be aware that this marketing is becoming increasingly pervasive – e.g. through the use of social media, and that it is

widely embedded in a range of media and entertainment which are favoured by young people e.g. music videos. Most importantly we believe that policy makers need to recognise that the marketing of alcohol like other addictive substances needs to be properly regulated in the interests of all New Zealanders.

### **Background to the New Zealand Psychological Society**

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has over 1500 members and subscribers and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology. For more information on the NZPsS go to **[www.psychology.org.nz](http://www.psychology.org.nz)**.