

## Submission: Liquor store signs in Auckland

The Cancer Society of New Zealand (NZ) is a non-profit organisation which aims to minimise the incidence, impact and inequities of cancer on those living in Aotearoa, New Zealand. We work across the cancer continuum including health promotion, supportive care, provision of information and resources, and funding of research. Cancer is New Zealand's single biggest cause of death.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Auckland Council proposed new signs bylaw and alcohol advertising. The Cancer Society of NZ is providing comment as alcohol is a key preventable cause of cancer. Tāmaki Makaurau has a large population including children and young people<sup>1</sup> providing an opportunity to start to address the normalisation and glamorisation of alcohol and its significant harms.

### Alcohol and Cancer Risk

Alcohol products are a Group 1 carcinogen (like tobacco). The World Cancer Research Fund recommends for cancer prevention, 'it is best not to drink alcohol'<sup>2</sup>. While many things affect cancer risk such as age and family history, there is strong evidence that alcohol (ethanol) increases the risk of at least seven types of cancer<sup>3</sup>. Alcohol can cause cancer of the mouth, pharynx (throat), larynx (voice box); oesophagus, bowel, liver and breast (in women)<sup>4,5</sup>. Bowel and breast cancer (in women) are two of the most common cancers in Aotearoa<sup>6</sup>. The high energy content (kilojoules or calories) of alcohol can also cause weight gain and weight-related-cancers<sup>7</sup>.

In Aotearoa alcohol products contribute to 1 in 25 cancer deaths in adults less than 80 years of age<sup>8,9,10,11</sup>. Drinking any amount of alcohol, even low levels, can cause cancer. For example, more than one-third of alcohol-attributable breast cancer deaths occur with an average daily consumption of less than two daily standard drinks<sup>12</sup>. However, the level of cancer risk increases with the level of alcohol consumption and the heaviest drinkers are most at risk<sup>13</sup>.

In 2007, 4.2% of all cancer deaths in people aged 15-79 years in New Zealand were due to alcohol use<sup>14</sup>. Breast cancer comprises over 60% of alcohol-attributable deaths for both Māori and non-Māori women and is the leading cause of death from alcohol among New Zealand women. Māori are disproportionately affected by alcohol-attributable cancer with Māori 2.5 times more likely to die than non-Māori and suffering a greater average loss of healthy life<sup>15</sup>. Despite this many New Zealanders are not aware of the risk alcohol plays in developing some cancers<sup>1</sup>.

#### 1) Restricting signs and advertising at liquor stores - your general thoughts

**Question. In general, do you think alcohol advertising signs at liquor stores should be restricted or banned? This includes signs on the footpath, windows, walls and verandahs of the store.**

Yes – The Cancer Society NZ would like to see a ban of alcohol advertising signs at and around liquor stores.

**Please tell us why - e.g. you may want signs & advertising to be removed to improve the look of your neighbourhood, to prevent children being exposed to alcohol ads as they walk to school, to protect Aucklanders with alcohol dependence or in recovery who are vulnerable to ads, etc.**

Our daily personal choices are heavily shaped by the environments in which we live. High quality evidence shows that alcohol marketing in our neighbourhoods is a cause of youth drinking, and that

<sup>1</sup> Richards R, McNoe B, Iosua E, et al. Changes in awareness of cancer risk factors among adult New Zealanders (CAANZ): 2001 to 2015. *Heal Educ Res.* 2017;32(2):153-162.  
[https://watermark.silverchair.com/cyx036.pdf?token=AQECAHi208BE49Ooan9kKhW\\_Ercy7Dm3ZL\\_9Cf3qfKac485ysgAAAowwggKIBgkqhkiG9w0BBwagggJ5MIICdQIBADCCAm4GCSqGSIb3DQEHAATAeBgIghkgBZQMEEAS4wEQQMujSByGw6A7zthi07AgEQgIICP1Mn7TP50jthr7m9dPa raJ0Z1ddCkH77rWV0YPFJhycz\\_WuE](https://watermark.silverchair.com/cyx036.pdf?token=AQECAHi208BE49Ooan9kKhW_Ercy7Dm3ZL_9Cf3qfKac485ysgAAAowwggKIBgkqhkiG9w0BBwagggJ5MIICdQIBADCCAm4GCSqGSIb3DQEHAATAeBgIghkgBZQMEEAS4wEQQMujSByGw6A7zthi07AgEQgIICP1Mn7TP50jthr7m9dPa raJ0Z1ddCkH77rWV0YPFJhycz_WuE).

the more alcohol marketing a person sees, the more likely they are to drink earlier and larger amounts<sup>1617</sup>. Unfairly, Māori and Pacific children are exposed to more alcohol advertising in the environments in which they live, with Māori five times and Pacific three times more exposed than Pākehā children<sup>18</sup>.

In 2014, the Ministerial Forum on Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship noted public frustrations regarding the saturation of alcohol marketing, especially in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods, and that exposure was often found alongside high levels of alcohol outlet density. This has flow on effects to the social, health and welfare of those communities. The report noted that communities were unable to prevent children's daily exposure to alcohol advertising, compounded by being unable to influence licensing decisions regarding new outlets in their neighbourhoods and restrictions to off-licence advertising were recommended.

The alcohol industry spends millions on alcohol advertising to promote sales and profit, despite knowing of its harms including cancer<sup>1920</sup>. To compound this, inequitable exposure to alcohol advertising along with higher concentrations of liquor stores<sup>2122</sup> are not consistent with Te Tiriti principles of active protection.

Everyone deserves to live in a community that enhances their health. Limiting signage and advertising in neighbourhoods is an opportunity for Auckland Council to prioritise the health and safety of its communities over food industry interests. Despite playing only a small contribution to the excessive advertising children and young people are exposed to, the Cancer Society is supportive of any such move to greater protections. This would be consistent with national and international evidence that policies addressing alcohol marketing, availability and affordability are the most effective at equitably reducing alcohol consumption<sup>2324252627</sup>.

**a) Reduce the size and number of signs at liquor stores**

**Question. Do you think the size and number of alcohol signs at liquor stores should be restricted?**

Yes, the Cancer Society supports the restriction of both the size and number of alcohol signs at liquor stores.

**Please tell us why - e.g. you may feel that bottle store signs are bigger than other signs in your neighbourhood, that large ads increase the visibility of the liquor store, that large ads normalise alcohol use in your neighbourhood, that the large number of signs at bottle stores make the retail space look messy, unattractive and contribute to it looking disorderly.**

The Cancer Society supports greater regulation around size and number of alcohol signage as a further way to reduce visible exposure, persuasive alcohol messages and its harm. Greater signage regulation is a way to honour obligations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and protect whānau from the normalisation and glamorisation of alcohol. We would like to see people's health prioritised over alcohol industry profits.

**b) Restrict liquor stores from showing signs of alcohol brands, drinking sessions, alcohol products**

**Question. Do you think signs at liquor stores should be restricted so they can only display objective product information (such as type of beverage - e.g. wine / beer / spirits)? This would mean that signs would not be able to display images that advertise particular brands of alcohol, drinking occasions, etc.**

The Cancer Society supports placing greater restrictions of alcohol signage including the use of images, brands and the drinking occasions. Tighter controls on alcohol marketing (akin to that required for tobacco advertising) would help limit the uptake of alcohol and reduce cancer risk.

**Please tell us why - e.g. that research shows that children and persons with alcohol use disorders (e.g. alcohol dependence or in recovery) are vulnerable to seeing ads with alcohol brands and products, that brands/product advertising normalises alcohol use in the community, that showing alcohol brands does not create healthy environments for our children, that alcohol brands advertising is unattractive.**

We know that the more young people are exposed to alcohol marketing, the more likely they are to start drinking earlier and engage in binge and hazardous drinking<sup>28</sup>. Evidence suggests that the disproportionate levels of exposure experienced in Aotearoa will significantly impact lifetime alcohol use and harms such as the higher rates of alcohol-related cancer experienced in Māori and at 2.5 times higher death rates than non-Māori<sup>29</sup>.

**c) Restrict liquor store signs on public places - eg. sandwich boards**

**Question. Do you think all alcohol advertising signs at liquor stores should be banned from public places? This would include sandwich boards on a footpath.**

**Please tell us why - e.g. that sandwich boards increase the visibility of the liquor stores in the community, that sandwich boards make the retail space look messy, that sandwich boards clutter pathways and cause problems for people with mobility issues and visual impairment, etc.**

The Cancer Society agrees that all signage should be banned from public places to reduce its visibility and uptake by young people. We need to align alcohol marketing policies with those that restrict tobacco.

**d) Restrict all forms of signs, except liquor store name, logo and brand colours**

The Cancer Society supports prohibiting all alcohol advertising signs at liquor stores on the footpath, windows, walls and verandas of the store. While stores should be able to display their business name, outside of the building should not be used to extend branding. No alcohol marketing signs, logos or branding on liquor store exteriors should be allowed. Advertising currently used in these settings glamourises and normalises alcohol but ignores its harm. Greater neighbourhood restrictions of alcohol advertising aligns with current legislated restrictions in Aotearoa New Zealand for tobacco and vape retailers.

Neighbourhoods need clear, straightforward rules around alcohol signage that compliance officers and communities can enforce. This is an opportunity for Auckland Council to promote messages supporting community good health as outlined in the Local Government Act 2002.

**e) Restrict all forms of signs AND require the exterior of the liquor store to be in a neutral colour**

**Question. Do you think that the outside of a liquor store should be a neutral colour? Stores would be able to display their business name but the outside of the building would be a neutral colour. No alcohol marketing signs, logos, or branding on the outside of liquor stores would be allowed. Please tell us why - e.g. the bold, bright colours used by liquor stores increases the visibility and normalisation of liquor stores in the neighbourhood, that the colour branding often dominates in the retail space, etc.**

**Do you have any other feedback on alcohol signs at liquor stores?**

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Currently, the Auckland Council Signage Bylaw 2015 is failing to protect communities from pervasive signs and advertising at liquor stores<sup>30</sup>. As is the industry-led voluntary code of practice of the Advertising Standards Authority Alcohol Advertising and Promotion Code<sup>31</sup>. Despite this, there is a lot of public support for greater alcohol advertising regulations in NZ<sup>323334</sup>. Increasing alcohol signage regulation is one step to reduce the visibility and harms of alcohol. However, exposure of alcohol advertising and sponsorship to children and young people is much more insidious and complex and much greater regulation overall will be needed to seriously address this. The Cancer Society NZ would also like to see Auckland Council go further and advocate to central Government for stronger national restrictions on alcohol marketing across all media and marketing channels, so that it is regulated in a manner consistent with the regulatory frameworks for tobacco and vaping products. This would also include legislation that empowers local government to specifically restrict signs and advertising at liquor stores.

Naku noa



na Shayne Nahu

**Kāo hikoi koe.**

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<sup>2</sup> World Cancer Research Fund, American Institute for Cancer Research. *Alcoholic Drinks and the Risk of Cancer.*; 2018. <https://www.wcrf.org/sites/default/files/Alcoholic-Drinks.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> International Agency for Research on Cancer, IARC. Working Group on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risk to Humans. Alcohol Consumption and Ethyl Carbamate, 2010. Cited 13 July, at <https://publications.iarc.fr/Book-And-Report-Series/Iarc-Monographs-On-The-Identification-Of-Carcinogenic-Hazards-To-Humans/Alcohol-Consumption-And-Ethyl-Carbamate-2010>.

<sup>4</sup> World Cancer Resource Fund. Alcoholic drinks and the risk of cancer. A Global Perspective. A Summary of the third expert panel. 2018, Cited 13 July 2021, at <https://www.wcrf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Alcoholic-Drinks.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Bagnardi, V. et al. Alcohol consumption and site-specific cancer risk: a comprehensive dose-response meta-analysis. *Br. J. Cancer*. 2015. (112): 580–593.

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- <sup>14</sup> Ibid 5
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