

Review of the Regulation of Alcohol Advertising:
tell us what you think



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This document asks you what you think about the way alcohol advertising is controlled in New Zealand. Please have a read, write down your thoughts, and send this document back to us by TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2006.

There are three ways you can return the document to us:

email advertisingreview@moh.govt.nz
(you can download this document from www.ndp.govt.nz and save it to your computer, to make it easy to type in your comments and email it back

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Cover illustration by Courtney Hopkinson.

Advertising – what counts?

“Advertising” doesn’t just mean ads on TV – in its widest sense, advertising includes billboards and posters in bus shelters, sponsorship or sports events or concerts, merchandise like t-shirts and bags, alcohol-branded giveaways or special deals, signs on supermarket shelves and in bars and clubs, price specials, radio promotions, packaging of bottles and cans... in fact, just about any public display of a brand’s logo is a kind of advertising. Advertisers are always coming up with new ways of promoting their products, like website competitions or funny text messages.

What’s the deal with this review?

what’s happening

There is public concern about the number of people who are harmed by alcohol, including young people. The Government wants to make sure that advertising doesn’t make this worse, and is reviewing the way alcohol advertising in New Zealand is regulated. This includes:

- the different ways alcohol is promoted
- who sees the ads
- where and when ads are seen
- what happens when an advertiser breaks the rules about how they can advertise their products.

why it’s happening

These are the Government’s aims when it comes to alcohol advertising:

- to ensure that advertisers stick to the “codes of practice” that govern them
- to minimise the number and type of alcohol ads that young people see or hear
- to minimise the types of marketing that might encourage alcohol-related harm, like drink-driving or binge-drinking
- to make sure any new types of marketing that might encourage harm don’t get established here.

The review is to check that these aims are being met.

how it’s happening

As part of this review, the Government is asking people throughout the country to share their views about alcohol advertising, including young people. This is because alcohol ads might sometimes seem to be aimed at young people.

Issues to think about

Here are some of the things that the Government will consider when it decides whether it needs to change the way alcohol advertising is controlled:

The timing of alcohol ads

At the moment, ads for alcohol can start showing on TV at 8.30pm when “adults only” programmes start playing, but lots of young people under 18 are still watching TV at this time. There are no time restrictions for radio ads – lots of young people listen to radio late at night.

Outdoor ads for alcohol

It's really hard to control who sees outdoor ads like billboards, bus-shelter ads, and signs outside shops that sell alcohol. Lots of young people below the minimum alcohol purchasing age see these ads.

Sponsorship

Lots of alcohol companies sponsor sports events, rock concerts or university student orientations – in fact, they're allowed to sponsor anything they like. These sorts of events are often really popular with young people. Although alcohol ads aren't allowed to show anyone that young people might see as heroes – like the All Blacks – alcohol companies are still allowed to sponsor them and display their logos as part of this sponsorship. Sport in NZ is sometimes associated with the “binge-drinking culture”, and some people believe that alcohol sponsorship of sports encouraged this association.

Names, branding, and shop displays

There are some guidelines for the packaging and names of products, and shelf signs for alcohol, but these guidelines aren't always well-known and there is no way of enforcing them. Also, although alcohol ads on television or on billboards currently aren't allowed to show “heroes of the young” like the All Blacks, packaged products on shop shelves can. It's very hard to control who sees this sort of advertising. Some of the things people have raised concerns about are:

- what alcohol products are called
- what alcohol packaging looks like, and what pictures it shows
- where alcohol is displayed or advertised in shops.

Merchandise

Lots of alcohol companies sell or run giveaway competitions of clothing or accessories with their brand-name on, like t-shirts, caps or bags. There are no rules saying that alcohol companies can't produce this type of gear, and there is also no way of controlling who is exposed to it out in the street.

New forms of marketing

New technology brings new kinds of marketing: text messaging, podcasting, MP3s, interactive website, streaming to cellphones and media players, and so on. It's really hard to control who sees alcohol ads in these forms, and how often, and also it's sometimes hard to identify who produced the ad.

Some more background information

Why the concern about alcohol?

Although many people in NZ drink safely, we all know that alcohol can be dangerous when it's abused. Lots of people in NZ think that it's normal to get drunk, and that it's okay to "binge-drink" (have a lot of drinks in one sitting). These ideas are part of our "drinking culture".

We need to make sure that advertisements for alcohol don't encourage the type of drinking that causes harm. This includes "risky" drinking, like getting so drunk that you get sick or have an accident, can't control your behaviour, get violent, or can't remember the next day what happened. It also includes things like drink-driving, drinking when you're pregnant, and becoming dependent on alcohol so you can't manage without it.

What does advertising do?

It's very hard to prove that alcohol advertising causes people to drink more. Some researchers think this is true, and others think that there's not enough evidence to show it.

Other factors besides advertising, such as price and what our mates do, impact on decisions we make about drinking. Marketing agencies pick up on ideas shared by groups of people, and use them in their ads. As a result of advertising, one alcohol brand may seem more fun, cool or sophisticated than other brands.

Alcohol ads might reinforce the idea that drinking is a natural part of a "good night out", and that alcohol makes people more relaxed and popular in social situations. These ideas encourage people to expect good things to happen when they drink a lot, and also support the feeling that it's okay to get drunk.

Alcohol advertising in NZ

Alcohol advertising in NZ is really widespread, and alcohol companies often try to encourage the belief that drinking their particular brand of alcohol will send a message out to other people about the sort of person you are. Advertisers often associate their brand with a particular sort of image or lifestyle – for example, they might link themselves to sports or music events, or use hit songs in their radio and television ads.

When the legal alcohol purchasing age was lowered in 1999 from 20 to 18, there was a new group of young people for advertisers to market to. Also, with more kinds of shops being allowed to sell alcohol (like supermarkets, dairies, and stores like The Warehouse), there is more competition between them. These things mean that NZers probably see or hear more alcohol ads every day than ever before.

What are the rules for advertising alcohol?

Because alcohol can cause harm, there are special rules for how it's allowed to be advertised and promoted. The main set of these is the "Code for Advertising Liquor" (CAL), which contains the specific rules about where and when all kinds of ads for alcohol can be shown, and what they can show. The CAL can be summarised in two main requirements:

- alcohol ads must not work against people selling or drinking alcohol in a responsible and moderate way
- alcohol ads must not encourage people under 18 years old to drink alcohol.

How are the rules for advertising alcohol enforced?

At the moment, alcohol advertising companies in NZ regulate their own advertisements. This means that it's up to them to make sure that they stick to the CAL. Advertisers have set up their own system (the "Liquor Advertising Pre-vetting System") to check that new advertisements won't be in breach of the CAL.

Anyone – that includes you – who thinks that an advertisement doesn't meet the standards of the CAL can make a complaint through the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, which is made up of advertising industry representatives and members of the public. The Advertising Standards Complaints Board examines the ad and decides whether the complaint should be "upheld", in which case the advertiser is asked to withdraw the advertisement. The Advertising Standards Complaints Board might decide that the ad is okay, in which case the complaint is not upheld.

Sometimes an advertiser will withdraw an ad before any complaint is laid, if it realises that it might not meet the standards of the CAL.

Price promotions in pubs and clubs are regulated under the Sale of Liquor Act, which says that alcohol promotions must not encourage excessive drinking. "Happy hours" are usually okay, but not special offers of lots of cheap or free drink over a short time period.

Need more information?

If you need more information about alcohol advertising in New Zealand before you write down what you think, you can find a more detailed version of this document online at www.ndp.govt.nz.

4. Is there anything that you think is a worry about alcohol advertising, or anything that's really good?

You might want to think about:

- where you see or hear alcohol ads
- what the ads show or say
- what free giveaways, competitions and special deals are out there
- what sorts of things are sponsored by alcohol companies
- what sort of alcohol-branded stuff you can buy
- how you can make a complaint if you think an ad is out of line, and where you find out how to do this.

5. Do you think the regulations about alcohol advertising in NZ:

- are too strict?

- get it about right?

- should be stricter?

Can you suggest ways the regulations could be improved?

6. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Tell us a bit about you

We want to make sure that we hear the views of young people from lots of different backgrounds, so please help us achieve this by filling in this information.

gender	age
male	13 or younger
female	14-15
ethnic group (you can tick more than one)	16-17
Pakeha/NZ European	18-20
Māori	20-24
Pacific	25 or older
Asian or Indian	
Other	

if you're filling this in on behalf of a group of young people:

who wrote down the information from the group?
i.e. youth worker, group leader, group member

how many people are in the group? _____

how old are they? _____

what part of New Zealand do you live in?

Please give the name of your town or suburb, or if you live in a rural area, please write "rural" and name your nearest town or city.

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this topic. If you have any questions about the review or about your submission, please email advertisingreview@moh.govt.nz.