

**ALCOHOL ACTION NZ
ELECTION SPECIAL NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2014**

Dear Colleague

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1. Who to vote for?

The late Sir Paul Reeves referred to the state of alcohol in New Zealand as one of the most important social issues of our time. Perhaps our upcoming vote in the general election should take into account where the various parties stand on alcohol law reform.

Simon Collins, senior reporter on social issues for the NZ Herald, has recently researched the nine main parties for their positions on adopting two fundamental policies to reduce harm from alcohol:

- a. Raise alcohol prices (excise tax and minimum price)**
- b. Phase out alcohol advertising**

These are the two most important alcohol reform issues that AANZ is now focussing on with the Call for Action on Alcohol to the incoming government (see below).

Here are the findings of Collins' research, in order of Party support from least to most in three groupings:

	a. Pricing	b. Advertising
ACT	No	No
United Future	No	No
National	No	Undecided
Labour	Yes	Undecided
Conservative	Yes	Part-support
Green	Yes	Yes
NZ First	Yes	Yes
Maori	Yes	Yes
Internet-Mana	Yes	Yes

If you've decided to vote for Green, NZ First, Maori, or Internet-Mana, you'll be voting for effective alcohol law reform.

A vote for Labour or Conservative will be a partial vote for effective alcohol law reform.

A vote for National, Act or United Future will be a vote for NON-reform on these two critical alcohol policies.

2. Alcohol & Cancer conference – Wednesday 17th June 2015 –Te Papa

Next year we are holding our conference jointly with the Cancer Society – a must-attend conference.

We need a sea change in the way heavy alcohol use is viewed within society. Formally establishing and then publicising the link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer drove much of the change in attitude towards smoking. The evidence linking alcohol and cancer is strong and we need to make sure it is more widely understood.

This upcoming meeting could well become viewed as the conference that caused the change in NZ; so worthwhile being there!

3. Nigel Latta reflects on his TV1 series

Nigel Latta has deservedly become even more of a respected household name over the past six weeks than he was before. Razor Films needs a huge vote of thanks from the NZ public as well. There was the alcohol programme itself but then two more – domestic violence and prisons – where alcohol was a feature. Finally the antics of the sociopathic (processed food) industry were portrayed in the sugar programme, which has strong echoes to the work of the alcohol industry.

Take a look at this short piece of reflection by Nigel Latta on his series – 10 Things...

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11316443

4. Independent Expert Committee on Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship (IECAAS)

There is a lot in the news at present, so you may have missed the publicity last Friday about this new group that Alcohol Action NZ is hosting (paying the bills).

At the time of the Alcohol Reform Bill, the Select Committee was inundated with thousands of submissions calling for much stronger reform measures than the tinkering the Bill contained. This included enacting the Law Commission's recommendation to follow the French example and phase out all alcohol advertising and sponsorship over a five year period, except for objective written information about different alcoholic products.

The government responded to the feedback by announcing it would set up an "expert forum" early in the following year ie after the general election of late 2011. However, the new National-led government subsequently didn't respond as announced, but rather waited nearly the whole electoral cycle until February 2014 before acting. With the next general election in sight, they made an announcement through Judith Collins and Peter Dunne of a "Ministerial Forum on Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship" with Graham Lowe QSM, ONZM, the well-known rugby league coach as chairman. However, the CEO of the industry self-regulation Advertising

Standards Authority is also on the group. Of further concern is the reporting time for this ministerial forum was set at 1 October 2014, ie 10 days *after* the general election, right in the middle of the normal turmoil of post-election party negotiations. This makes it look as if the government is just playing politics with alcohol advertising and sponsorship and wanted to bury the issue. Excise tax increases and minimum unit pricing have both already been buried by this team.

The new independent expert committee (IECAAS) consists of the following members:

Professor Jennie Connor, University of Otago, Dunedin

Professor Janet Hoek, University of Otago, Dunedin

Associate Professor Antonia Lyons, Massey University, Wellington

Mr Shane Bradbrook, Wellington

Ms Amy Robinson, Auckland

Professor Mike Daube, Curtin University, Perth

Professor Peter Joyce, University of Otago, Christchurch (Chair)

IECAAS will monitor the work of the Ministerial Forum and produce an independent report on alcohol advertising and sponsorship in due course. IECAAS has uncovered no new research since 2010 that would invalidate the Law Commission's 2010 recommendations. It is hoped the ministerial forum will endorse the Law Commission's recommendations in its final report.

It has been very pleasing to hear positive comments about IECAAS from both Mr Lowe and Prof Max Abbott (another member of the ministerial forum). However, the lone Minister Dunne (now that Judith Collins has resigned) rather predictably made disparaging remarks about IECAAS in the media.

5. The work of Katherine Rich behind the scenes

Nicky Hager's new book "Dirty Politics" is mainly about corruption within the National-led government in its association with Cameron Slater and the use of his Whale Oil Beef Hooked blogsite via intermediaries to denigrate political opponents.

However, Chapter 7 "Cash for Comment" outlines similar shenanigans undertaken by Big Business, including Katherine Rich, ex-National MP and now CEO of the Food and Grocery Council. The Food and Grocery Council (like Woolworths) sounds like mother's milk, but is in fact a lobby group for the tobacco, alcohol and food industries.

What is revealed in Hager's book is deduced from emails (many now available for viewing through the Twitter site Whaledump). Katherine Rich feeds material to Cameron Slater in order to denigrate public health professionals who speak out for reform that might affect the tobacco, alcohol and/or food industries. She does this by using (and paying) an intermediary, Carrick Graham, who previously worked for 10 years as "corporate affairs manager" for British American Tobacco. Mr Graham now runs his own PR company, and passes material onto Cameron Slater who in turn (for a fee) puts the material up on his blog under his own name, thus hiding the presence of both Carrick Graham and more particularly Katherine Rich working behind the scenes.

We might expect this sort of thing from Carrick Graham, but Katherine Rich is also a government appointed member of the Health Promotion Agency (HPA).

Thirty-three senior public health professionals have now written a letter to the Prime Minister, about the matter questioning the appropriateness of her position on the HPA Board, with a copy to the Minister of Health. John Key and Tony Ryall have probably put the letter into permanent filing, and if asked publically about the issue will say that it is all just the work of extreme left-wing conspiracy theorists.

6. Progress on the Call for Action on Alcohol

Over 100 leaders in New Zealand have now signed the Call for Action on Alcohol to the incoming government of 2014. Remember the call is for legislation to enact four priorities related to marketing and pricing, the two main drivers of alcohol demand:

- *Phase out alcohol advertising*
- *Phase out alcohol sponsorship*
- *Introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol*
- *Increase the tax on alcohol*

Most notably has been the Mayor of Christchurch, Lianne Dalziel, supported by the whole of her council bar one. Other councils in New Zealand are now discussing whether to sign or not.

If you would like to sign this Call for Action on Alcohol, and you are a national or community leader, including heads and representatives of professional or community organisations, societies, associations or other groups, send an email to Lindsay Atkins: coordinator@alcoholaction.co.nz with a formal description of your designation.

If you would like to read more about the rationale for choosing these four priority actions, go to www.alcoholaction.co.nz where you can see a brief background paper along with the full Call for Action on Alcohol statement and Initial Signatory list.

Please **join us in circulating this Call for Action on Alcohol statement** to all leaders at your place of work and in your community and invite them to sign it.

If you would like some support about the process of approaching community leaders in your locality don't hesitate to contact Jacqui Robinson, National Network Coordinator for Alcohol Action NZ. Jacqui's email is: jacqui.alcoholaction@gmail.com.

The process of contacting community leaders is very instructive for establishing who are on board with effective alcohol law reform.

7. Coalition agreements

Whoever forms the next government will have the fresh opportunity of advancing effective alcohol law reform for the good of New Zealand.

It is unlikely that National, Act and United Future (the NON-reformers in terms of alcohol pricing and marketing) will be able to form a government together and will rely on another coalition partner to form a government.

So if it is to be a National-led government there is likely to be at least one coalition partner which supports effective alcohol law reform and which may make it part of the deal.

If it is to be a Labour-led government not only is partial commitment for reform already there (pricing), but other coalition partners could very likely make the phasing out of alcohol marketing part of the deal.

Exciting times!

Sincerely
Doug and Jennie
Medical Spokespeople
Alcohol Action NZ
We need more than just tinkering

“Alcohol Action NZ is a national organisation promoting the 5+ Solution, an evidence-based set of strategies that will significantly reduce the enormous social, medical and personal damage alcohol misuse is inflicting on our society”