

**ALCOHOL ACTION NZ
NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2016**

Dear Colleague

- 1. Three questions to ask candidates in the Local Body elections**
- 2. Highly successful regional meeting series on alcohol and cancer**
- 3. Key facts about alcohol and cancer**
- 4. Irresponsible alcohol industry denies alcohol causes cancer ‘moderate’ drinkers**
- 5. Want to become more active in alcohol law reform?**

1. Three questions to ask candidates in the Local Body elections

Polling closes on October 8th for the Local Body elections.

Here is some simple alcohol action to do: Ask candidates who are standing for either Council, the District Health Board, or both, whether they think the city/district has too much alcohol-related harm, and then follow up with these three questions:

1. Do you support a reduction in the trading hours for alcohol in our city/district?
2. Do you support reducing the number of venues from which alcohol can be purchased in our city/district?
3. Do you support banning all alcohol advertising and sponsorship from Council/District Health Board premises and activities?

These three questions touch on aspects of the 5+ Solution that Local Body politicians have the power to influence.

You could make contact with candidates by email, phone or face to face. The more personal and respectful the better.

2. Highly successful regional meeting series on alcohol and cancer

Jennie Connor and Doug Sellman gave presentations at six regional meetings recently on the topic “101 things the alcohol industry won’t tell you about alcohol, let’s start with this one... ALCOHOL CAUSES CANCER.

Each of the six evening meeting was organised and chaired by the local Alcohol Action group, and followed by an “activist breakfast” the next morning (“activist defined as “active citizen”). Not only were there good turnouts of people in each of the small cities chosen – New Plymouth, Tauranga, Napier, Palmerston North, Nelson and Timaru – and local groups strengthened as a result of the two meetings, but local and national publicity was excellent around the time of these talks.

Publicity was greatly enhanced by two publications by Jennie Connor in the lead up to the series:

- Alcohol-attributable cancer deaths under 80 years of age in New Zealand, in DRUG AND ALCOHOL REVIEW
- Alcohol consumption as a cause of cancer in ADDICTION

See this short video of Jennie explaining the association between alcohol and cancer at the outset of the series:

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/news/83199096/experts-take-alcohol-causes-cancer-message-to-the-regions>

3. Key facts about alcohol and cancer

Here is a list of key facts about alcohol and cancer for those who were unable to get to one of the regional meetings. Note in particular points #10 and #11.

Don't hesitate to circulate wider. As you'll see in the next item, the alcohol industry is not going to warn its customers about the strong association between alcohol and cancer and the fact that relatively normal New Zealand drinking up to ½ bottle of wine a day is associated with about half of the alcohol-related cancers.

- There were 243 cancer deaths attributable to alcohol in 2007.
- 126 of these cancer deaths were in men, 117 were in women.
- This represents 4.2% of all cancer deaths, i.e. 1 in 25.
- 60% of all alcohol-related cancer deaths in women were due to breast cancer.
- This represents 14% of all breast cancer deaths, i.e. 1 in 7.
- There is no level of drinking that does not increase your risk of cancer to some extent, but heavier drinkers are more affected than light drinkers.
- Reducing your drinking will reduce your risk of cancer regardless of how much you currently drink.
- Alcohol does not increase the risk of all types of cancer. Drinking contributes to cancer of the mouth and throat, voicebox, oesophagus, liver, bowel and breast.
- The road toll is coming down but the alcohol-related cancer toll is not; Government policies that regulate driving are reducing the road toll.
- About half of all alcohol-related cancer deaths occur in men and women who drink 4 standard drinks a day or less – about half a bottle of wine.
- More than a third of breast cancer cases are occurring in women drinking less than two standard drinks a day – about quarter of a bottle of wine.
- The evidence that alcohol causes cancer is very strong; the evidence that alcohol has any benefits for your heart is much weaker.

4. Irresponsible alcohol industry denies alcohol causes cancer in 'moderate' drinkers

The alcohol industry has shown its true colours once again. There are about 250 New Zealanders dying each year of an alcohol-related cancer. There are probably more as well with evidence growing for cancers of the pancreas, prostate, melanoma and certain types of stomach cancer.

A responsible industry would go out of its way to warn customers of these facts. But what do we see instead? We see an industry denying the scientific evidence and denigrating the scientists – just like the “Merchants of Doubt” did for tobacco and more recently for climate change.

Here are several of the public comments announced since the joint Alcohol Action/Cancer Society conference on Alcohol & Cancer in 2015:

Dr Samir Zakhari, spokesperson for the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, formerly a biomedical scientist of the NIAAA

- In a Dominion Post opinion editorial *“Unfortunately last month in Wellington a group of well-intentioned researchers made a claim – and not for the first time. They said that moderate alcohol consumption causes cancer... is simply incorrect...”*
- Professor Connor’s work is, *“lacking scientific credibility”* ... her conclusions are based *“on “cherry-picking epidemiological articles”*.

Mr Robert Brewer, CEO Spirits New Zealand

- Recent work by Prof Jennie Connor *“would have us believe drinking causes cancer. This is not supported by credible research...”*
- *“It’s a little like saying that if a study finds people who wear blue jeans drive too fast you conclude that blue jeans must cause road fatalities”*

Two things can be concluded from these and other comments: firstly, the alcohol industry are beginning to panic about the growing publicity about alcohol causing preventable cancers in ‘moderate’ drinkers; and secondly, they are no longer ignoring the public health messaging, but are now actively engaged in trying to squash the truth.

5. Want to become more active in alcohol law reform?

If you would like to become more active in alcohol law reform, don’t hesitate to make direct contact with any of the medical spokespeople or alternatively send an email to coordinator@alcoholaction.co.nz

You will then be included in an email list to receive more regular messages, including suggestions about local groups, lobbying, letter writing and writing submissions.

Alcohol action continues.

Sincerely

Doug, Jennie, Sam, and Geoff

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”