

Submission to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee on the Alcohol Reform Bill

To the Committee

This submission is made by **Sisters of Mercy Wiri**.

Names: Sister Anne Hurley and Sister Margaret Martin
Address: P. O. Box 98923, Manukau
Auckland 2241
Phone: 09 263 6464

We wish to appear before the committee to speak to this submission.

Introduction

Sisters of Mercy Wiri established in 1990 is a not for profit community based provider of social services with a social justice and community development focus, based in Wiri, a suburb close to the Manukau Shopping Centre.

As an active non-governmental organisation it also contributes to a number of regional forums that focus on improving social outcomes, health and well being in the region. Through its ministry the agency embodies the mission of the Catholic Religious Congregation of women, Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand. The Sisters of Mercy were originally founded by Catherine McAuley in Dublin in 1831 to work with the poor, especially women and children, and first came to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1850.

During the more than twenty years Sisters of Mercy Wiri has been working in the community the harmful effects of the liberalization of the availability and sale of alcohol have been all too painfully obvious.

It is for this reason that Sisters of Mercy Wiri strongly supports the findings of the Law Commission's 2010 report "Alcohol in Our Lives: Curbing the Harm". The Alcohol Reform Bill is supported by Sisters of Mercy Wiri to the extent that it concurs with the findings of the Commission, and similarly is opposed by Sisters of Mercy Wiri where it is not in agreement with the findings of the Commission.

In particular,

Minimum Purchase Age

Sisters of Mercy Wiri is opposed to a split purchase age of 18 years for on licenses and 20 years for off licenses. The purchase age needs to be the same for on licenses as well as off licenses, and this age must be 20 years.

Raising the Price of Alcohol

Sisters of Mercy Wiri supports increasing the price of alcohol by increasing the excise tax on alcohol as well as establishing a minimum price per unit of alcohol.

Licensing Criteria

Sisters of Mercy Wiri supports legislation that enables communities to adopt a local alcohol policy that determines the concentration, location, and hours of alcohol outlets in their area. This must restrict or prevent clusters of off-license outlets, especially in vulnerable or deprived communities, reduce alcohol sale hours and ensure community involvement in the allocation of off-licenses.

Drink Driving

Sisters of Mercy Wiri strongly supports lowering the adult alcohol limit as well as the youth alcohol limit to a least 0.05mg alcohol per 100 ml blood. Youth are not the only drivers drinking and driving and causing injury and loss of life to others, as well as damage to property.

Supply to Minors

Sisters of Mercy Wiri supports making it an offence for anyone, other than a parent or guardian, to supply alcohol to an under 20 year old.

Education and Treatment Services

Sisters of Mercy Wiri strongly endorses increasing and improving public education regarding the healthy use of alcohol as well as treatment services for people with alcohol dependency issues.

In conclusion, Sisters of Mercy Wiri acknowledges that there needs to be legislation to improve the situation with regard to the misuse and over supply of cheap alcohol in Aotearoa New Zealand. We strongly endorse the findings of the Law Commission 2010, and encourage Parliament to adopt them in full.

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