

# SUBMISSION

To the Manukau City Council

On the Manukau City Council Draft Strategy - 'Reducing Alcohol Related Problems in Manukau' (2002)

## INTRODUCTION

1. This submission is from the Northern Region office of the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand - Te Kaunihera Whakatupato Waipiro O Aotearoa (ALAC), Level 18, 48 Emily Place, P O Box 8391, Auckland.
2. ALAC is a crown owned entity that operates under the Alcohol Advisory Council Act (1976).
3. The primary objective of the Council is the encouragement and promotion of moderation in the use of liquor, the discouragement and reduction of the misuse of liquor, and the minimisation of the personal, social, and economic harm resulting from the misuse of liquor. ALAC's mission statement is: "More moderation; less harm".
4. ALAC's core functions have been defined by Government as being:
  - Encouragement, promotion, sponsorship, and co-operation in alcohol-related research
  - Dissemination of information relating to problems of alcohol misuse
  - Development, promotion, implementation and support of educational programmes
  - Sponsorship of innovative programmes for treatment, care, and rehabilitation
  - Provision of policy advice and recommendations to the Government, public and private sectors
  - Monitor and make recommendations on the advertising of liquor.

## GENERAL

5. We wish to make the following comments on the general intent of the Draft Strategy - 'Reducing Alcohol Related Problems in Manukau'.
6. ALAC is delighted to see that Manukau City Council is introducing a comprehensive strategy to minimise alcohol-related harm in Manukau. It is also pleased to become involved as a partner in the development and implementation of the different aspects of the strategy that are proposed.
7. In annual terms, the direct costs of alcohol misuse in New Zealand have been estimated as being \$2 billion (Devlin, 1997). It is also estimated that 20.1% of all deaths in the 15-34 year old group can be attributed to alcohol, mainly from road injuries, followed by suicide, assault and miscellaneous injuries (Scragg, 1995)
8. By addressing some of the issues in regard to the supply, provision and promotion of alcohol in Manukau City, it is likely that there will be an impact on some of the wider health issues in the community.

9. The strategy also states its relationship to 'Tomorrow's Manukau', the Manukau City Council Strategic Plan. There may be other strategies that also are linked to this document, such as the work the Manukau City Council has started to reduce gambling problems.

#### SPECIFIC COMMENTS REGARDING ISSUES RAISED IN THE STRATEGY

10. We wish to make the following comments on the specific content of the Draft Strategy - 'Reducing Alcohol Related Problems in Manukau'.

11. On page 4 of the Strategy it is suggested that a review take place every three years. ALAC believes that if an effective review is to take place, base line information on alcohol-related problems in Manukau should be collected before the Strategy is introduced and monitored regularly. Information should also be collected on the involvement of other partners, as well as specific information on each of the tools of the Strategy, such as liquor licence approvals, placement and complaints about alcohol advertising on Council property.

**Recommendation 1: ALAC recommends that base line information on alcohol-related problems and issues related to the tools of the Strategy is collected in order to better evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy.**

12. In order for Manukau City Council to sustain the innovative work it has commenced so as to minimise alcohol-related harm, ALAC believes that the role of coordinating and monitoring this Strategy become a dedicated one for a Council official. It is likely that functions such as liquor licensing, youth development and by-law monitoring are spread throughout different parts of Council. If one person has the role of coordinating the work across these areas and 'championing' the Strategy there is a greater likelihood of the Strategy succeeding in its aim.

**Recommendation 2: ALAC recommends that the 'championing' of the Strategy becomes a function of one official within Manukau City Council.**

13. Tool One of the Strategy introduces some new conditions on licences in regard to hours of operation and location. ALAC's view is that section 4(1) of the Sale of Liquor Act 1989, which states: "The object of this Act is to establish a reasonable system of control over the sale and supply of liquor to the public with the aim of contributing to the reduction of liquor abuse, so far as that can be achieved by legislative means", should be used to justify stances on saturation of premises, proximity of premises to schools, petrol stations, etc, and also to justify stances on licensing hours because of the potential increase in harm that could occur due to longer hours of access to alcohol.

14. Tool Two of the Strategy is a new initiative and the intent of the approach, namely 'to inform Manukau's communities about the consequences of excessive drinking of alcohol and the problems that are generated from that' is to be applauded. ALAC believes that, based on present evidence, providing information on the consequences of heavy drinking, without combining this with other strategies, is unlikely to be effective in changing behaviour over time.

15. For example, a common response to youth drinking issues is to opt for classroom-based education. However, international research (for example, Wagenaar and Perry, 1992) indicates that education on

its own is not cost effective. Instead there seems to be more support for community-based approaches that simultaneously focus on schools, parents and the wider community.

16. ALAC also wishes to draw Manukau City Council's attention to the review of alcohol and drug education that the Ministries of Youth Affairs and Education are currently undertaking and the review of national and international alcohol and drug evaluations that ALAC is currently undertaking to inform its policy advice. ALAC will shortly be developing a policy statement on the effectiveness of alcohol and drug education and its modes of delivery. We will provide you with a copy of this statement of its completion. Both of these reviews may help inform Manukau City Council's work in this area.

**Recommendation 3: ALAC recommends that Tool Two is rewritten to reflect the evidence that education on its own is unlikely to be effective in improving drinking behaviours.**

17. The Strategy makes some suggestions for educational initiatives. ALAC suggests that Manukau City Council consider an 'underwriting scheme' for youth events. This would be designed to help young people in Manukau to organise more safe, supervised parties and events, like dance parties, gigs, skate competitions etc. Often people find it difficult to set up such events because of the costs. Such a programme would be likely to take away some of the risk by offering some financial back up and advice for young people who want to organise local events.
18. If young people have access to safe, supervised, fun events they are less likely to experience harms, including alcohol-related harms. ALAC has developed guidelines for safe public events, which Manukau City Council may find useful (see enclosed document).

**Recommendation 4: ALAC recommends that Manukau City Council consider establishing an 'underwriting scheme' for youth events.**

19. Tool Three includes initiatives for strengthening relationships among agencies. ALAC strongly supports this tool, as co-operation and trust-building among agencies will be a key success criterion for the whole Strategy. The suggested approaches are the establishment of a formal accord and local group meetings. ALAC believes that groups engaged in other forums in Manukau with similar aims, such as the liquor liaison groups, should be engaged in discussion so that duplication is avoided.

**Recommendation 5: ALAC recommends that when the Manukau City Council establishes the formal accord, it avoids any duplication of the objectives of existing networks.**

Ron Tustin  
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Alcohol Advisory Council

**References:**

Devlin N J et al. 1996. *The social costs of alcohol abuse in New Zealand*. Economics Discussion paper. Dunedin: Economics Department, University of Otago.

Robert Scragg, 1995. A quantification of alcohol-related mortality in New Zealand  
*Australian and New Zealand Journal of Medicine* 25(1): 5-11.

Wagenaar A C, Perry C L. 1992. Community Strategies for the reduction of youth drinking; Theory and Application. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* vol 4:319-345.