



Newtown Residents' Association (Inc.)

PO Box 7021
Wellington South

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Alcohol Management Planning.
Wellington City Council
PO Box 2199
Wellington

ALCOHOL PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Newtown Residents Association submits the following comments for consideration by the Alcohol Planning Policy Development. Our comments are from a wide range of members of our Association, compiled by a subcommittee and endorsed by a monthly meeting of the membership. Our submission is particularly Southern Ward and Newtown based and can also be read in a similar fashion for the central city. We believe in drinking in moderation with responsibility.

A) PUBLIC PLACES LIQUOR BAN

Our members support the continuation of the Liquor Ban in Newtown and the CBD. Newtown as a community gained much from the placing of a Liquor Ban on its streets. We had less broken glass, fewer drunks in the street, fewer public fights, and greater awareness by persons of addressing liquor problems.

It has to be recognized that Newtown is unique in that it has the Regional Hospital, (& Psychiatric Ward), AA Hope Recovery Program run by the Salvation Army, large areas of high Council Housing, a big university student population, high levels of mental health patients, half way houses, and a range of other Social Health programs to assist persons with a range of difficulties, be it social, mental, disabled, drink and drug issues. There are many active church programs, such as City Mission, Presbyterian Social Services, Salvation Army, PIC, to name a few.

With our large and diverse population means that a sector of our community are at risk to alcohol and drugs. The Liquor Ban brought a calmness to Newtown and took a lot of social, domestic and police pressure off. The Ban also enhanced our parks, play areas, and public streets.

However, the Association calls also for a strengthening of the Ban to reinforce its intent, educate new residents and seek further compliance. The law as it currently stands puts all the responsibility on people, other than the person who is drunk.

The liquor outlet/management or barman can be fined for serving someone who is drunk, but there does not seem to be any responsibility on intoxicated persons for getting that way. We do not mean here the recognised alcoholic. We refer to the individual or groups of individuals who preload to a state of intoxication before they hit the bright, or dim, lights of Courtney Place/Cuba street. The imbibor/drinker must be responsible for getting themselves into an intoxicated state. They do it deliberately and by choice.

To this end we recommend:

- a) Publicity be given to the Liquor Ban as to what it means, the area, and expectations. This needs to be done each year because of the changing nature of our population.
- b) Penalties be reviewed - we support more instant fines, and at higher amount.

We like the concept of a "24 Hour Move On Notice" being issued by the authorities (Police/WCC) to force the wayward person to take stock of their actions and go home to sober up.

We like the educational opportunity of any person who presents themselves at the Hospital of Fri/Sat nights, due to excess alcohol, be informed to how much has been spent by Police and Health workers on making them safe, and maybe they could when sober, complete a 'remorse' penalty of doing some community service.

B) CCTV:

We recommend an extension of the CBD CCTV cameras usage to help the WCC and Police identify persons who clearly look like they have pre loaded too much, and would cause problems later with their behavior.

Presently 16 cameras are in use, extensively in the Cuba St/Manners St/Courtney Place. We suggest other sites be identified such as John Street Intersection, Basin Reserve and Johnsonville Mall.

C) PUB CLOSING TIMES

The Association acknowledges that in Newtown with only 4 licensed pubs that have raised their standards the activity is rather small, the patrons don't generally cause any difficulties so 3am closing could be in order, as often the patronage is small at that point in the evening.

In the CBD however, the Association supports the one-way door policy that will be tried with the pubs trying that concept earlier, from 12 midnight. We in the Newtown Residents' Association also feel that closing hours in the CBD should be staggered so as to avoid a sudden huge crowd pouring out onto the streets and on to us nearby suburbs. We understand that the WCC together with the Police and the Hospitality Industry will address this issue.

D) SUPERMARKETS - HOURS OF TRADING

We recognize that the off license trading by the large supermarkets sells 70% of wine and beer in NZ. We have two major Supermarkets in Newtown being New World and Countdown, both have extensive ranges of alcohol for sale and on display.

Linked to the issue of pre loading we advocate the supermarkets shortening their hours of selling alcohol to either 9pm or 10pm on any one night.

Also we feel the supermarkets could do an "educational encouragement program" to encourage customers to buy food when purchasing large quantities of alcohol. Such a concept could be developed within the stores need to develop a "Good Corporate Citizen" policy that includes engagement with the community.

E) SUPERMARKETS - ADVERTISING

The Association acknowledges any shop the right to advertise its product. But we feel that the two big supermarkets could advertise their alcohol products less aggressively and more conservatively. This means that posters displaying cheap prices of beer or wine shouldn't be allowed on exterior windows and walls. The new Act points that way as well.

Internally within these shops we would also like the aggressive advertising we see to be toned down a bit. The new Act will be establishing what size of display areas will be allowed, and how many and we wait to see the development and compliance to that, suffice to say, we feel some alcohol selling areas are already too large, and distract from the core purpose of the supermarket to sell food.

Supermarkets run extensive campaigns in local and nation newspapers, as well as extensive mail box drop (junk) mail. The percentage of each ad runs to almost 20 to 25% focused on alcohol. We feel the supermarkets should roll back such over the top advertising.

F) SUPERMARKETS – RUBBISH GENERATED

Given the large sales by supermarkets we raise the following issues:

- a) given the large extend of broken glass of beer and wine found on our streets particularly during Fri/sat nights, or any special events, it may be timely for the producers and sellers to move away from glass and move to cans only.
- b) also to see a 'bounty' put on glass bottles whereby customers could take the empty wine bottles back to the store and get, say 10 cents. (note, some supermarkets charge you 10cents for the plastic bag, so why not be paid 10 cents for the return bottles to be placed in glass/can recycle bins in the supermarkets car parks.
- c) as there is also an increase in the amount of beer cartons/containers left in and around the supermarkets selling beer we think these supermarkets should provide at cost to them more rubbish recycle and general rubbish bins to stop what is happening. Particularly at the John St area.

G) LICENSING

COSTS: The Association does agree that the full cost of alcohol licensing should be cost recovery on the industry/applicant. We do understand that WCC is moving towards that, rather than the present situation where the ratepayer pays 40%.

The cost of community groups licensing supervised BYO zones at community events in public places should recognise this as a volunteer not-for-profit community group host-responsibility initiative (required under the Public Place Liquor Ban) – a public service, and as such be much cheaper than for commercial based temporary special licensed areas that are selling alcohol for profit. This licensing cost, and the requirement for 2 Licensed Bar Managers to be in attendance is not what the Association was lead to believe would be required during the public consultation prior to the Public Place Liquor Ban.

H) DENSITY OF LICENSES:

We acknowledge that density of license raises many issues as to how many, who decides is enough and engagement with community. We say there are too many, but we recognize the hundreds of licensees, such as cafe's and numerous pubs are responsible and provide an important aspect of Wellington's vibrancy, food culture and entrainment scene.

We look forward to see what the WCC develops to address the issue of license density. We would be interested as to how a cap on bottle store/off licenses would work, how the community could be involved without having to go the 'oppose' or 'objection' route.

There should be emphasis on the authorities to move earlier against any licensee who is not up to standard.

I) CULTURE CHANGE

The Association acknowledges our deep centered 'drinking culture' and although no one authority (or persons) can have a magic wand to cure the downside of our entrainment style, we are pleased to see positive changes. We all know that the rugby 7s some three years ago was heading for disaster, but with co operation between the hosts, Police, Council and the Rugby Union better outcomes have been achieved the last two years. This meant that punters could still rage and party, watch some great rugby, but whilst at the same time exercising a greater degree of personal and group responsibility.

The Association notes with disappointment the huge sale of Alcopops or RTDs, which includes a high sugar content and high alcohol level at 8%, and as these drinks are targeted at our youth, we feel the off licenses who sell these products (and the suppliers) should pull back on their excessive advertising campaigns in regards these products.

The Association would support any initiatives by WCC/Health Sector/Hospitality Industry for educational programs regarding a person's right to drink and socialise, but enhancing 'with responsibility for themselves and for others. Members of the Association have participated at the various forums the WCC has conducted. We look forward to the policy development outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Our Association has strong views on the over promotion and over supply of alcohol to vulnerable members of society.

These Newtown Residents' Association comments on the alcohol management strategy for Wellington are summarised from a wide range of members' experiences and concerns. If the Council's Alcohol Planning Policy Development team has any questions, or would like more information our subcommittee volunteers would be more than happy to correspond further, or to meet up and discuss this. The Alcohol Planning Policy Development is an important initiative.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at martin.hanley@vuw.ac.nz, or on 389 7316 if you would like our Association to provide more detail on our grass roots local experience of this important social issue.

Yours sincerely



Martin Hanley
President
Newtown Residents' Association