



**Media Statement**

**19 May 2015**

**Public health doctors call for change to alcohol policies**

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM) hopes the government will respond to New Zealanders' concerns about the social impact of alcohol abuse.

President, Dr Caroline McElnay, says stories appear almost daily in the media highlighting both the human impact of alcohol abuse and the fact that the community wants a change in alcohol policy.

"We can't continue to ignore the very significant social, health and economic issues caused by alcohol abuse in New Zealand."

Dr McElnay said many public health medicine specialists are on the frontline when it comes to addressing the hazardous impacts of alcohol.

"They are increasingly feeling the new legislation is a toothless mechanism that doesn't reduce alcohol-related harm.

"The alcohol industry and supermarkets seem to be the only winners."

Dr McElnay said alcohol abuse causes up to 35% of injury-based presentations into New Zealand's accident and emergency departments and this increases to 70% during the weekend.

"Both the College and now the New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) have strong policies designed to reduce alcohol-related harm.

"In particular, we agree with the NZMA that the price of alcohol needs to increase and the marketing and promotion of alcohol must be phased out.

"These strategies have been successful in reducing smoking rates and we need to take the same approach with alcohol which, in many instances, can be just as harmful."

Dr McElnay said the policies proposed by the College and the NZMA reflect research and expert opinion on the dangers of alcohol abuse, and the clear call by New Zealanders that things have to change.

"We urge the government to heed these calls and to act now to help protect our communities from the dangers that our current alcohol culture brings."

**ENDS**

- For a copy of the NZCPHM's Alcohol Policy visit: <http://www.nzcphm.org.nz/policy-publications>
- For the NZMA's Policy on Reducing Alcohol-related harm visit: [https://www.nzma.org.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/42542/Alcohol-Briefing18.may.FINAL.pdf](https://www.nzma.org.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/42542/Alcohol-Briefing18.may.FINAL.pdf)