

14/05/2026

Chairperson
Justice Committee
Parliament
Wellington

**Submission: Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Improving Alcohol Regulation)
Amendment Bill**

Tēnā koe

Age Concern New Zealand He Manaakitanga Kaumātua Aotearoa welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on *the Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Improving Alcohol Regulation) Amendment Bill*,

Alcohol is often identified as the most harmful drug impacting the lives of New Zealanders.¹ Although alcohol is a legal product, hazardous drinking causes widespread harm to individuals, families and communities. People do not live in isolation; they live in neighbourhoods and communities. The sale and supply of alcohol in our communities must protect the health and well-being of those who are most at risk of harm.

With Aotearoa's increasing older population, hazardous drinking among older people is a concern that must be considered when developing liquor licensing policy, especially as hazardous drinking among older adults can be hidden from view.

Alcohol related harm is often associated with younger New Zealanders, however research carried out by the University of Otago indicated that up to 30% of older New Zealanders are at risk of alcohol related harm.² The study also found that the number of intoxicated people over the age of 54 presenting at Christchurch Hospital's Emergency Department doubled in the decade 2013 to 2022.

Some older adults may experience alcohol-related harm throughout their lives, while others may consume more alcohol as they age.

There is also evidence that a number of grandparents are raising their grandchildren due to alcohol and other drug related harm impacting the children's parents. This can involve family

¹ <https://drugfoundation.org.nz/news-and-reports/drug-harm-ranking-study-reveals-alcohol-methamphetamine-are-most-harmful-in-nz>

² <https://www.otago.ac.nz/news/newsroom/study-finds-alcohol-ed-presentations-increasing-among-older-new-zealanders>

violence and child neglect as well as the on-going impact of conditions such as foetal alcohol syndrome which then requires grandparents to care for grandchildren long-term.^{3, 4}

Our feedback is specifically from the perspective of our mahi with older New Zealanders and our commitment to their rights and wellbeing and that of their whānau/families. Older adults can be more sensitive to the effects of alcohol, especially if they have multiple health conditions and are taking medication. This makes the impact of alcohol less predictable. The proposed changes in liquor licencing policies will impact on older adults and the people and communities they care about. We offer our feedback for consideration by the Justice Committee.

Who we are

Age Concern is a trusted charity working in local communities throughout Aotearoa to support older people, their friends and whānau. Our values – Dignity, Wellbeing, Equity, and Respect for older people are our guiding lights and underpin everything we do. We aim to ensure older New Zealanders get the best advice and support no matter where they live in Aotearoa.

With a network of 28 local Age Concerns operating in 38 locations, and a national office based in Wellington, we are the place to go for services and information about issues for older New Zealanders.

We are proud of our heritage in standing up for the rights of older New Zealanders for more than 75 years. As an organisation, our focus is contributing to the overall health and wellbeing of older New Zealanders. We work to prevent the abuse and neglect of older adults; improve their health and wellbeing; reduce loneliness and social isolation; and provide advocacy for older people's rights.

Our feedback

1. Subpart 1- Amendments relating to the general licensing process. Restrictions on objections: Clauses 4 to 7

ACNZ **does not support proposed changes** to limit the persons who can object to a licence application through the process outlined in the Amendment Bill. We do not agree with reducing community voice and their ability to influence local alcohol decisions. Communities have the right to limit the number of liquor licenses in their neighbourhoods and their ability to influence policy should be protected. It is important that families who may

³ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/83990757/grandparents-raising-grandchildren-deal-with-effects-of-drugs-alcohol-and-neglect>

⁴ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/the-listener/new-zealand/the-alarming-surge-in-kiwi-grandparents-raising-young-children/4PC3ABIZ4ZCFZM7RRIOOATHVKM/?ref=readmore>

have members living in different parts of a region can still have a say on licensing applications that may impact on the whānau. For example, grandparents may be aware of the potential for increased harm on younger family members but live outside a venue's locality and find themselves unable to make an objection.

It is overly simplistic to assume that only those living or working in a locality will experience harm from a licensed premise. People socialise across the region within which they live. In a newspaper article about council amalgamation requirements in 'The Post' on 5 May 2026 Wellington Mayor Andrew Little is quoted as saying " People are roving all over the region all the time and we use each other's facilities all the time....we now operate increasingly as a region as opposed to individual cities and it'd be pretty hard to exclude yourself from that."

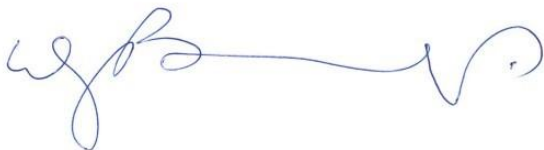
2. Other proposed changes in the Amendment Bill

Age Concern New Zealand will not comment on the remaining individual proposals in the Amendment Bill other than to say that making alcohol more accessible at an increased range of venues, along with limiting community voice, is counter-intuitive to reducing alcohol-related harm. We ask you to reconsider what is proposed based on prioritising the wellbeing of those who are likely to experience greater harm from the increased amount of hazardous drinking that will result from these changes.

Closing comment

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our submission on the *Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Improving Alcohol Regulation) Amendment Bill*. We look forward to hearing the outcome of the consultation process.

Ngā mihi



Karen Billings-Jensen
Chief Executive
Age Concern New Zealand