

MEDIA RELEASE

May/June 2014



Single bottle ban on beer misguided, says Brewers' Guild of New Zealand

The Brewers' Guild of New Zealand has serious concerns about the implications of single bottle beer bans as proposed by some regional Local Alcohol Policies.

"Not only is this a blunt and crude way to try and deal with the issues, it will be to the detriment of consumer choice, sensible and moderate drinking habits, and a burgeoning entrepreneurial beer industry", said Ralph Bungard, President of the Brewers' Guild of New Zealand. "Many beers are only sold in single bottles, so this could have a severe impact for many brewers."

Currently Auckland, Marlborough, Rotorua are considering single bottle beer bans as a condition of an off-licence. Auckland has proposed excluding "boutique and handcrafted beers", and Rotorua has proposed excluding "speciality beer". Marlborough has proposed a carte blanche ban on all single bottle sales.

"Banning single bottle beer sales has been suggested as a way to prevent young people accessing alcohol and to prevent drinking in alcohol ban areas, but imposing confusing, arbitrary definitions and unreasonable restrictions is not the way to tackle these issues. It is about retailer responsibility, personal (drinker) responsibility and proper enforcement of the laws", Bungard commented.

"The focus is completely round the wrong way. Rather than the regulators worrying about whether the beer has been purchased as a single bottle, or what type of beer it is, they should spend the energy enforcing retailer responsibility, alcohol ban areas and penalising the individuals who are in breach current alcohol laws. They have more powers to do this under the new Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act than ever before."

"It is also worth noting that beer is generally the lowest ABV beverage on the shelf. It is naïve to think youth drinking or drinking in alcohol ban areas, or even pre and side loading for that matter, will stop if particular types of alcohol are not sold in single bottles. These law changes are more likely to encourage people to buy alcohol in bigger pack formats. Think of the analogy where, to fight obesity, the law was changed so that it was illegal to buy one pie and instead you must buy two or more! If bars implemented a policy where they refused to sell single pints of beer and instead told customers that they could only purchase beer in lots of four pints there would be an outrage – understandably! These Local authorities are implementing poorly thought out laws that will have unintended negative consequences."

The vast majority of people buying single bottles of beer are doing so to moderate their alcohol consumption or to experiment with new and exciting beer options. These law changes will target sensible, moderate drinking habits – the very habits that recent national law changes were aimed to encourage. The Brewers' Guild wants to see alcohol-related harm reduced as much as any member of their community, but this is not the right way to go about it".

ENDS

For further comment, please contact:

Ralph Bungard, President of the Brewers' Guild of New Zealand

021 615 688