

BPW NZ Oral Submission for the Land Transport Amendment Bill

11.25 am Thursday 13th March Parliament House Meeting Room 5

Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee:

Present: Deputy Chair **Mike Sabin**, National, Northland, **Chris Auchinvole**, National, List, **Carol Beaumont**, Labour, List, **Cam Calder**, National, List, **Darien Fenton**, Labour, List, **Andrew Little**, Labour, List, **Simon O'Connor**, National, Tamaki, **Denise Roche**, Green, List, **Ruth Dysart**,

Kia ora tatou, Ko Hellen Swales

I am the chair of Issues for “The New Zealand Federation of Business & Professional Women” (BPW NZ)

As an organisation we have been advocating and petitioning the governments of the day since 1990 to look at all issues related to Alcohol. Also as an organisation which focuses on the Health & Safety of Women, children and families we have always taken a keen interest in all things related to Alcohol.

We are committed to encouraging the government of the day to introduce any legislation that reduces the consumption of alcohol and encourages responsible drink driving attitudes. We congratulate the government on the piece of legislation that was introduced on the 18th December 2013; to the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012, aimed at improving New Zealand's drinking culture and reduce the harm caused by excessive drinking.

The Bill represents an important public health intervention and therefore should incorporate a mandatory review after two years to consider how effective it is, and where possible introduce further reduction as was the case in Norway, Sweden, Poland and Japan, where further reductions were looked at.

When looking at reviews of international policy there are significant road safety benefits to lowering BAC limits. The findings consistently show that when BAC limits are lowered, there is a reduction in the number of crashes occurring on the roads.

New Zealand does an annual survey “Public attitudes to Road Safety” and in this survey there is an increasing trend that a lowering of the BAC would be welcomed. So why the hesitation!

Speed and alcohol are widely acknowledged as major road safety problems. The majority of New Zealanders recognise that drink-driving and speeding increase the chance of an accident.

Who in this room has not been touch or effected by someone involved in a road accident? If not I am sure you know of someone that has. And how many of those accidents were able to sited as Alcohol, speed related or both as the contributing factor to the cause of the incident. The social impacted is devastating and we must not allow it to continue.

The Bill as it stands will change people's drinking behaviour but will be even more effective if stronger sanctions than currently proposed are incorporated, such as doubling the fines and increasing the demerit points to 70.

We also believe that the collected infringement fees need to be directed towards drink driver, education, rehabilitation and recommended treatments for repeat offenders. There also needs to be a targeted public campaign similar to the “it’s not OK” message around family violence, to drive home the message that drink driving is not acceptable.

In summing up:-

BPW NZ appreciated the need for balance when considering the application of this bill, public safety versus the rights of the individual, but when the safety of the whole community is at risk we would like to see stronger penalties being issued. Prevention has always been better than the cure.

- We support the lowering of BAC to 50 milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood which brings New Zealand more in line with what is happening internationally and which is recognised now as the standard.
- Many studies show that a lot of family violence, random assaults, damage to property, and sexual abuse and other crimes are fuelled by excess alcohol.
- We cannot afford to continue to pay the considerable social, health and medical costs
- If drink driving attitudes are left unchecked and allowed to continue there is supporting evidence that suggests that this, becomes intergenerational. We need to break the cycle.

Also with the rise of alcohol related problems being identified among women we would advocate for more gender specific statistical data to be collected. So we can be more focused on any intervention, education support networks needed to be put in place. Programs need to be more specific when addressing these issues as gender and age will all require a different approach.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to speak to our submission and we support in principle the implementation of this Bill.

Questions posed:-

Carol Beaumont – why do you believe that the need for statistical data on gender is so important?

Darien Fenton – want more clarity on the Virginia based statistical information we quoted in our submission

Mike Sabin – What a more in depth explanation why we felt that the suggested penalties were not severe enough

Mike Sabin - Did we have any data that would suggest heavier penalties would be a deterrent?

Chris Auchinvole – did we think that this piece of legislation was draconian and how as an organisation would we approach implementing this Bill.

Simon O’Connor - His constituents would be penalized if they go out for a meal and have a couple of glasses of wine - do you think this is fair

Mike Sabin – If we raised the penalties (fines) would we not be burdening those less fortunate who wouldn't be able to pay with increased debt. (This question was posed as we followed the Salvation Army who said already their clients are in heavy debt and couldn't afford more)