

23.02.21

Malo lava Mr Chair, Brent Impey and Board Members of New Zealand Rugby,

Fa'afetai lava for considering my letter (17 July 2020) and your thoughtful reply. My Grandad and I are extremely looking forward to the upcoming 'Super' season. Our nerves were on edge with the Highlanders preseason games, looking forward to 2021 being our year again haha.

Thank you again for the ever increasing work to support players, whānau and our communities wellbeing. As you know well the resources Nathan, Eleanor, Suzie, Nehe and many others have led the co-design of, supported many people through the difficulties of our lockdowns. Towards the end of last year, and into 2021 it has been a privilege hearing Lima Sopoaga, Dan Carter, Sir Graham Henry, and Liam Squire to name but a few influential men sharing the mental health challenges they have faced, and what supports helped them. Their vulnerability and courage, which NZ Rugby is cultivating in its approach to mental health and wellbeing is phenomenal, and will continue to help many.

On another front, it was hugely disappointing that the 2021 naming sponsor of the Highlanders is Speights. While I understand they have a long affiliation with rugby in Otago it is against the essential efforts you as the NZR Board are stewarding, and the NZ Rugby mental wellbeing team are championing that this can be possible. As I shared in my previous letter:

“The Ministerial Forum on Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship, for example, reported in 2014 and made several recommendations with a focus on reducing harm to young people arising from alcohol advertising and sponsorship. However, there has not yet been a comprehensive government response to recommendations about combating harmful alcohol consumption and to the work on pricing or on advertising and sponsorship.

In relation to alcohol reform, it has long been argued that most New Zealanders drink responsibly and should not be 'punished' for the actions of the small minority who do not drink responsibly. We do not believe one in five New Zealanders drinking hazardously each year is a small minority. We also know that alcohol's reach across society is far greater than simply the sum of its impacts on individual drinkers; families, friends and communities are all

touched through one person's drinking..." (175)¹

We also shared how tragically alcohol plays a role in at least half of youth suicides. (173)²

Since our Mental Health and Addictions Inquiry report in 2018, the *latest Annual Update of Key Results 2019/20: New Zealand Health Survey* published by the Ministry of Health show we are currently stagnant in our national addressing of hazardous drinking.³ The reports referenced earlier are also clear in highlighting the depth of what we are facing with more than half of the young people who have died by suicide, alcohol playing a role in that tragic outcome. As leaders of our national sport, and a deeply influential flag bearer in leadership around our mental and physical wellbeing, particularly youth wellbeing it cannot be underestimated the influence you have to help activate the national response we need.

Ultimately I would love a future where the naming rights of games, and other elements that children, young people and families are drawn to would not need to be sold to brands which do not live the values, comradery, physical and mental wellbeing that NZ Rugby players, and staff try to. But as that is the current financial model there should be a strong ethical interim approach to prevent harmful, over promotion of alcohol to children and young people, as well as contribute to suicide prevention.

In reading though your constitution, I see a way that would further strengthen your leadership in wellbeing. Informed by your comments in your kind reply I would suggest the following. I am asking you to please amend your constitution - Section 2.5.(c) would instead say:

"Seek sponsorship, with the limit that naming sponsors of NZ Rugby teams cannot be alcohol brands, products or companies."

This bold action would stamp out the ability for the names of our special teams to be used as a tool to legitimise a harmful product and prevent the good names of our teams being complicit in the terrible statistics that alcohol harm and promotion have on children, young people and families.

¹ He Ara Oranga – Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addictions 2018 - <https://mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/inquiry-report/he-ara-oranga/>

² As at 1.

³ For reference I include the summary on alcohol in the appendix.

Fa'afetai for considering this and the pride and support this organisation has given to so many during our global COVID pandemic. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Manuia le aso,



Josiah Tualamali'i

Appendix - Update of Key Results 2019/20: New Zealand Health Survey – Ministry of Health, November 2020.

“Hazardous drinking

- One in five adults (20.9 percent) were hazardous drinkers in 2019/20, with no significant change since the time series began in 2015/16. (Note: while data on alcohol consumption was collected in earlier years a change in question format in 2015/16 means it is no longer comparable).
- The prevalence of hazardous drinking among men was 28.7 percent, whereas it was 13.6 percent in women. Men were 2.1 times more likely to be hazardous drinkers than women, after adjusting for age.
- The highest prevalence of hazardous drinking was among those aged 18–24 years, at 32.4 percent. The prevalence of hazardous drinking was also high in those aged 25–34 (23.8 percent), 35–44 (21.5 percent) and 45–54 (27.7 percent). Of those aged 15–17 years, 11.6 percent had engaged in hazardous drinking over the year before taking part in the survey; this is an increase on last year, when it was 6.3 percent. From age 55 and over, the rate decreases with increasing age.
- Of Māori adults, 36.1 percent were hazardous drinkers in 2019/20. Māori adults were 1.8 times as likely as non-Māori adults to be hazardous drinkers, after adjusting for age and gender. In contrast, Asian adults were much less likely than non-Asian adults to be hazardous drinkers, after adjusting for age and gender.”⁴

⁴ <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-update-key-results-2019-20-new-zealand-health-survey>