

17.07.20

Talofa lava NZ Rugby Board,

I was extremely excited to see the announcement of the upcoming North vs South clash. I have loved Super Rugby Aotearoa and being able to get along to a number of the games with my Grandad John to see our beloved Highlanders.

When I got the email announcement of the upcoming game via email "family-friendly tickets and kick-off time..." I was gutted to see Steinlager is the naming sponsor of the match. I wrote a letter to Environment Canterbury back in February around this same topic alcohol advertising and its impact on children, while the ask is slightly different here, and the global and national financial circumstances may make this choice more difficult I ask that you please disassociate NZ Rugby, all your teams, products and activities from the alcohol industry.

The most recent World Health Organisation, UNCIEF and Lancet Commission into 'A future for the world's children?' co-chaired by Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, and released in February 2020, has called for a new protocol to be added to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, for regulators to act against commercial harm to children.¹ They say:

"Children around the world are exposed to severe threats from the commercial sector, by advertising and marketing that exploits their vulnerability, by governments not regulating products that harm their growth and development, and by use of their data and images without their knowledge and permission. According to Kickbusch and colleague's approaches to health promotion have "totally underestimated globalised corporate power combined with its global marketing onslaught and its transnational influence on political decision making," a discussion that has yet to be explicitly extended to children." - (Page 630)

"Children worldwide are also highly exposed to advertising for products nominally for use by adults only, such as alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarettes, with exposure to advertising associated with greater consumption." – (Page 631)

As one of the former 2018 Panel Members of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction, I would like to thank NZ Rugby for the important efforts you are taking around mental health of players, families, and our country. Your submission alongside the Mental Health Foundation to the Inquiry, and the work Nathan, Eleanor, Suzie, Nehe and many others are creating is world leading. From our report I wanted:

"Throughout the Inquiry process, we heard a strong appetite for strengthening alcohol reforms, particularly around decreasing the exposure of young people to alcohol advertising and promotions. We believe the case for change has been made and action on alcohol

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32540-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32540-1/fulltext)

reform is required. In our view, the main impediment to stronger alcohol reform is a lack of political will.” - (Page 175)²

“Action on reducing the harmful use of alcohol has stalled. Current policy approaches are not having the required impacts, particularly for some groups who are disproportionately affected by harmful alcohol use such as Māori and people living in the most socioeconomically deprived areas. We believe the Government has already been presented with evidence-based options for reducing the impact of harmful alcohol use and that immediate action is needed to curb New Zealand’s problematic drinking culture...”

We detail how successive Governments have not acted to address alcohol harm deeply enough, and while NZ Rugby does not have responsibility for Government inaction in this space, as a core leadership organisation in mental health wellbeing decisions in Aotearoa ending these connections would be an important natural next step. By making this change NZ Rugby could be acting similarly to the Warehouse and other employers who led national action establishing domestic violence leave, which started the conversations resulting in Parliament enacting legislation afterwards. Sponsorship, promotion, and brand alignment around alcohol are some of the areas we speak to in the report that give further rise for consideration:

“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.²⁰³ 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)

You all could make a significant historic step, to set that the foundation of rugby in Aotearoa leads in holistic wellness to demonstrate.

Fa’afetai tele lava for your work, and tautua for our communities.

Ia manuia,

Josiah Tualamali’i

² <https://mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/>