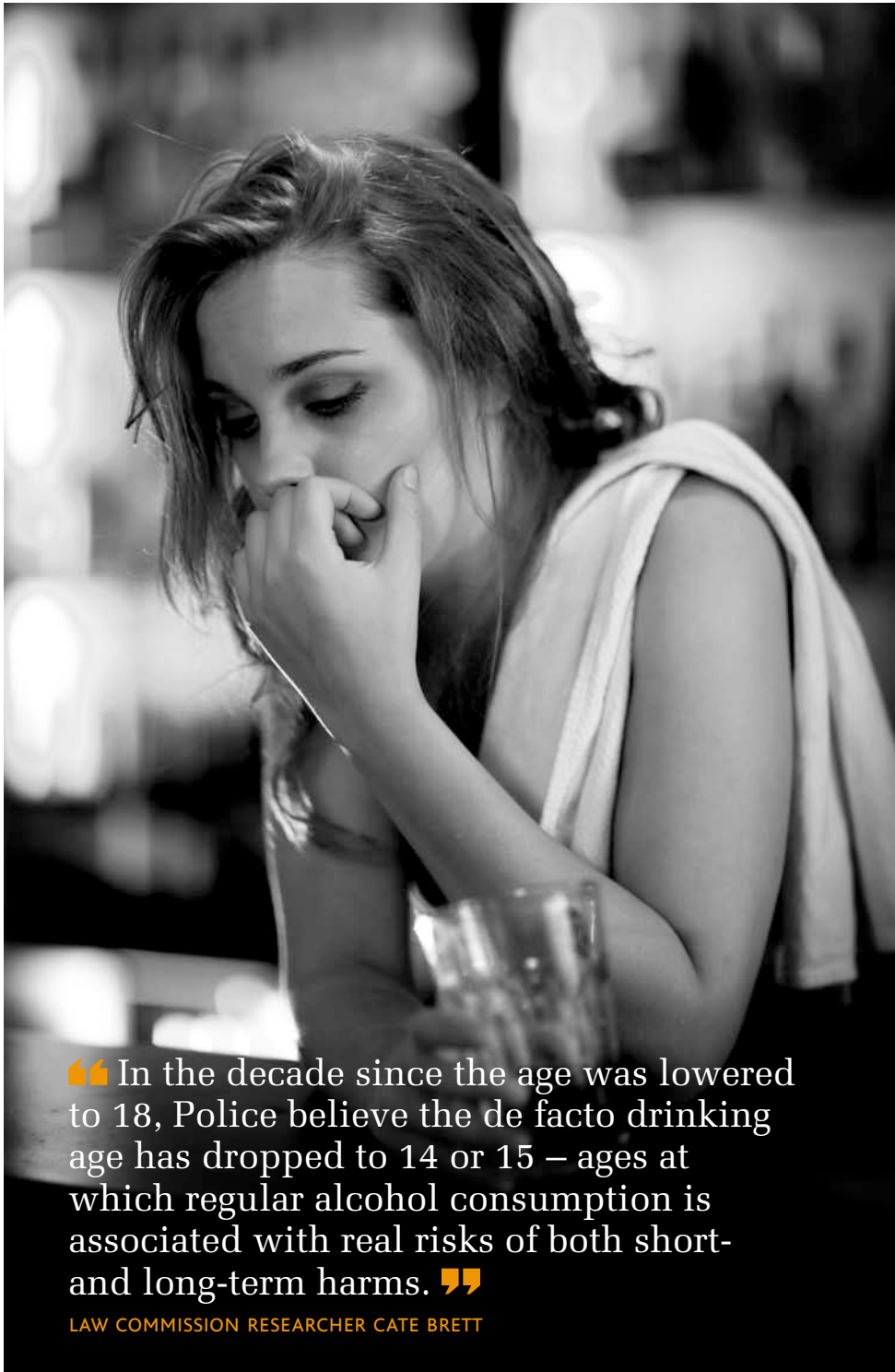


It's your  
turn to shout

AT THE HEART  
OF THE MATTER,  
NZ DRUG  
FOUNDATION.

Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa

## Have your say on Purchase Age



“ In the decade since the age was lowered to 18, Police believe the de facto drinking age has dropped to 14 or 15 – ages at which regular alcohol consumption is associated with real risks of both short- and long-term harms. ”

LAW COMMISSION RESEARCHER CATE BRETT

### HAVE YOUR SAY ON ALCOHOL LAW CHANGES.

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE ON

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[drugfoundation.org.nz/  
your-turn-to-shout](https://drugfoundation.org.nz/your-turn-to-shout)

A new alcohol bill is currently before Parliament. The Alcohol Reform Bill is the Government's response to the review of our liquor laws by Law Commission President Sir Geoffrey Palmer. The Law Commission made 153 recommendations but not all have been accepted. There is still time to persuade the Government to strengthen its response.

#### FACTSHEETS

- 1 Background to Alcohol Reform Bill
- 2 Alcohol Pricing
- 3 Alcohol Marketing
- 4 Alcohol in your Community
- 5 Drink Driving
- 6 Social Supply
- 7 Purchase Age

# It's your turn to shout

## KEY FACTS

THE CURRENT PURCHASE AGE FOR ALCOHOL IS 18 YEARS.

SINCE THE PURCHASE AGE WAS LOWERED FROM 20 YEARS IN 1999, THE LEVEL OF ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM EXPERIENCED BY YOUNG PEOPLE HAS INCREASED.



8 IN 10 YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-17 HAVE CONSUMED ALCOHOL IN THE PAST YEAR.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO DRINK EVEN EARLIER THAN THEY DID A DECADE AGO.

ON-LICENCE PREMISES ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAFE AND SUPERVISED ENVIRONMENTS THAT THEY ARE SOMETIMES MADE OUT TO BE.

# 78%

OF SUBMISSIONS TO THE LAW COMMISSION SUPPORTED INCREASING THE MINIMUM PURCHASE AGE.

## What did the Law Commission recommend?

- The purchase age for alcohol be raised to 20 years with no exceptions.



## What was the Government's response?

- **Not quite there.** The Government recommend introducing a split purchase age of 18 years for on-licences (e.g. bars and nightclubs) and 20 years for off-licences (e.g. bottle stores and supermarkets). It considers this would reduce alcohol-related harms associated with drinking off-premises, especially the practice of 'pre-loading'. It also points to the reduced opportunity for supply by 18 and 19 year olds to younger peers.

## OVERALL GRADE AWARDED

# B

SUFFICIENT, AN ACHIEVEMENT THAT DEMONSTRATES SATISFACTORY UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE BUT IS ONLY BEGINNING TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS. A WATERED-DOWN RESPONSE.

### PURCHASE AGE VERSUS DRINKING AGE?

New Zealand has a purchase age, not a drinking age. This means only those aged 18+ can buy alcohol. People under 18 can still legally drink in certain private settings. A drinking age of 18 would make it illegal for those under 18 to drink any alcohol.

“ Raising the purchase age would, however, potentially affect the current rights of around 132,000 18 and 19 year olds. The market of potential purchasers would be reduced, which may have some impact on the industry, particularly off-licences. ”

CABINET PAPER OUTLINING THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

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“ While 70% of liquor is consumed off licensed premises, over 50% of offending linked to alcohol as an aggravator can be traced back to licensed premises. ”

GAVIN CAMPBELL, MANUKAU POLICE

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## Research and experience shows:

- Drinking at a young age is a risk factor for alcohol-related harms as a young adult and later in life.
- Since the purchase age was lowered from 20 to 18 in 1999:
  - there has been a significant increase in intoxicated people under 20 presenting to hospital
  - there has been an increase in alcohol-related crashes among 15 to 19 year olds
  - young people are starting to drink at an even earlier age.
- In a recent survey, eight in 10 people aged 16–17 years had consumed alcohol in the past year, with 71% of these consuming a large amount at least once and 36% drinking at least weekly.
- International evidence shows that raising the purchase age reduces adolescent access to alcohol, reduces harmful youth drinking and raises the age at which young people start drinking.
- The Law Commission considered the idea of a split purchase age but rejected it, as there is no evidence that on-licences provide a lower-risk drinking environment.
  - A significant proportion of serious assaults occur in and around on-licensed premises.
  - A split purchase age is difficult to enforce and sends out conflicting messages.
- Since 1999, new research has shown that the brain continues to develop until well into a person's 20s. Drinking alcohol at a young age harms the developing brain.



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## What should the Government do?

- Listen to the evidence and accept the Law Commission's recommendation to return the purchase age back to 20, with no exceptions.
  - Treat purchase age as a health and social policy issue rather than a conscience issue when voting in the House.
  - Make alcohol policy on the basis of the evidence and experience rather than on what might be popular.
  - Not allow its concern for the drinking and voting rights of young people to over-ride the real and significant harms that have occurred since the lowering of the purchase age.
  - The Law Commission's recommendations were designed to be a 'mutually supportive package'. We believe the Government should accept the Law Commission's entire suite of recommendations instead of 'cherry picking' the least politically risky options.
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## What should you do?

- Have your say in creating better alcohol laws by making a written submission to the Select Committee before Tuesday 1 February 2011. This can be as short or long as you like, and you can use this toolkit to help you.
- Tell the Government that it should accept all 153 of the Law Commission's recommendations.
- If you make a written submission, you should also make an oral presentation. You can be as creative as you like. This is your chance to tell your story about the impact of alcohol on your family and community and to tell our politicians about the changes that you want to see.
- Encourage your friends, family and community to get involved. The more New Zealanders who speak out, the more likely it is that the Government will listen.
- Ask to meet with or write to your local MP and let them know your views on alcohol law change.
- Visit [www.drugfoundation.org.nz/your-turn-to-shout](http://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/your-turn-to-shout) for more information and the full toolkit.

## ABOUT US



The New Zealand Drug Foundation has long been interested in how laws governing the sale and supply of alcohol could be strengthened to reduce alcohol-related harm and create a healthier drinking culture in New Zealand. We provide leadership and representation for our nationwide membership of organisations and individuals working on alcohol and drug issues. This factsheet is one of a number we have developed as part of a toolkit to support communities to be heard on the Alcohol Reform Bill. **Check out our website for more information and the full toolkit.**

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ON ALCOHOL  
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