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MEDIA RELEASE

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Thumbs up to a healthier drinking culture

“There is a growing body of evidence that alcohol is associated with an increased risk of a number of cancers. The Government’s alcohol law reform package announced today by Justice Minister, the Hon Simon Power, will unfortunately not greatly impact upon this statistic, but it is a start,” said Health Promotion Manager for the Cancer Society, Jan Pearson, “With a focus on controlling youth drinking it does not address the strategies that really work.”

The package is the Government’s response to the Law Commission’s review of alcohol laws contained in the report: *Alcohol in Our Lives: Curbing the Harm*. It adopts in full, or in part, 126 of the 153 Law Commission recommendations, as well as making other changes.

Releasing the document the Minister noted that this is a starting point for Parliament’s consideration of the country’s alcohol laws. He said he hoped to introduce legislation to Parliament in October with plans to pass it into law before the end of this parliamentary term.

“The package focuses on minimising alcohol-related harm, including crime, disorder, and public health problems - but to be effective alcohol prices need to be raised and marketing, advertising and sponsorship of sport by alcohol companies addressed. Alcohol is not just a crime and violence issue, but contributes to chronic illnesses” said Jan Pearson.

“If people are better supported to adopt a healthier culture around drinking it will become less of a problem for society in years to come. Scientists and researchers continue to find a link between even moderate alcohol drinking and an increased risk of certain cancers, especially breast cancer and liver cancer. In all 1,000 deaths a year in New Zealand are attributed to alcohol, so there is some real improvements we can make here.”

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