

Brainwave Trust Submission on
The Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Improving Alcohol Regulation)
Amendment Bill

May 2026

Brainwave Trust shares research-based information to support positive health and development for all pēpi, tamariki and taiohi.

Alcohol causes considerable harm, particularly to our children and adolescents. Aotearoa New Zealand already has higher rates of hazardous drinking than many other countries.

Brainwave Trust opposes:

- any legislative changes that make alcohol more accessible
- restricting the ability of communities, iwi, and public health groups to influence decisions about alcohol.

Any reform to alcohol policy must prioritise the health and wellbeing of our tamariki and rangatahi over commercial interests.

Ensuring a healthy start for our children requires collective efforts to ensure their early development is not impacted by alcohol exposure.

Alcohol use during pregnancy

- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause widespread and lasting harm to the child, including Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This is accompanied by ongoing social, emotional and economic impacts.
- Societal norms around alcohol influence the drinking of expectant parents. Therefore, legislation should support parents to abstain from alcohol during this crucial time, not make alcohol more accessible.
- Social inequities exist in the rate at which children experience prenatal alcohol exposure. It is particularly important that communities already experiencing a disproportionate number of alcohol outlets can influence future alcohol decisions that affect them.

Alcohol use in adolescence

- Alcohol use in adolescence is associated with an increased risk of poor health outcomes, including:
 - injury to self and others e.g. car accidents, assaults
 - self-harm & suicide
 - mental health difficulties
 - drinking disorders in adulthood
 - unwanted or risky sex, sexual assault, unplanned pregnancy
 - criminal behaviour
- A range of environmental and regulatory factors influence adolescents' alcohol use including:
 - Number and proximity of alcohol outlets
 - Laws governing pricing, age, accessibility.

Loosening regulatory settings is likely to increase alcohol-related harm.

For further information, and references please read:

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/understanding-prenatal-alcohol-exposure/>

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/alcohol-in-adolescence-what-the-research-tells-us/>

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/alcohol-other-drug-use-in-adolescence-a-quick-snapshot/>