

7 February 2014

Transport and Industrial Relations Committee
Select Committee Services
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON 6160

Land Transport Amendment Bill

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) welcomes the introduction of the Land Transport Amendment Bill (the Bill) and the opportunity to make a written submission on the Bill.

The NZMA is the country's largest voluntary pan-professional medical organisation with approximately 5,000 members. Our members come from all disciplines within the medical profession and include general practitioners, doctors-in-training, specialists, and medical students. The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and promote professional unity and values, and the health of New Zealanders.

The NZMA strongly supports the Bill's proposed lowering of the adult legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit from 80 mg per 100mL to 50 mg per 100 mL of blood. We were disappointed that this measure was not introduced along with the Alcohol Reform Bill in 2011, but are pleased that it is now being proposed. There is clear evidence to show that the lower the BAC level, the lower the risk of crashing.¹ Furthermore, lowering the BAC limit has been shown to change driver attitudes and behaviour towards drinking, with drivers consuming less alcohol before driving.²

The Ministry of Transport has previously estimated that a lower BAC limit of 50 mg per 100mL could prevent between 15 and 33 fatalities and 320 to 686 injuries every year, with an estimated annual social cost saving of between \$111 million and \$238 million.³ We note that a more recent analysis, reported in the Bill, indicates that, conservatively, an average of 3.4

¹ Frith & Strachan. Road safety impact of establishing blood alcohol concentration levels at 0.05. Land Transport Safety Authority of New Zealand. 2002 (revised June 2008).

² Ibid

³ Ministry of Transport. Safer Journeys Discussion Document. August 2009, p13.

fatalities and 64 injuries per year could be saved with this lowered limit, and that the policy would have a positive net present value of \$200 million over 10 years.

Along with the proposed lowering of the BAC limit, the NZMA would also like to see a greater focus on directing recidivist drink drivers to appropriate treatment programmes. While we recognise that this does not form part of the Bill under consideration, repeat drink driving infringements and offences are often a sign of an underlying drinking problem.

The NZMA is not seeking an oral presentation on this Bill but we hope that our written submission is helpful to the Committee during its deliberations. We look forward to the progression of this Bill into legislation.



Dr Mark Peterson
NZMA Chair