

14 May 2026

Committee Secretariat  
Justice Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Teenaa koutou katoa,

## **Submission from Waikato District Council on Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Improving Alcohol Regulation) Amendment Bill**

### **Introduction**

Waikato District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Improving Alcohol Regulation) Amendment Bill (the Bill). Council supports the intent of the Bill to strengthen and modernise the alcohol regulatory framework, recognising the significant role that effective alcohol regulation plays in protecting community wellbeing, reducing alcohol related harm, and supporting safe, thriving towns and rural communities.

Council acknowledges that the Bill seeks to address long standing challenges within the current regime, including improving local responsiveness, strengthening decision making processes, and enhancing the effectiveness of Local Alcohol Policies (LAPs). Council considers that legislative settings must appropriately balance national consistency with the ability for territorial authorities to respond to local circumstances, risks, and community expectations.

Council has statutory responsibilities under the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 (the Act), including administering licensing functions, implementing the LAP, and monitoring and enforcing compliance. This submission is guided by the Act's objective to minimise alcohol related harm and aligns with the objectives of the Waikato District Local Alcohol Policy.

As a high growth district with a diverse mix of urban, rural, and fast developing communities, Waikato district experiences varied alcohol related impacts. Council is therefore supportive in legislative improvements that deliver clarity, efficiency, and certainty for councils, communities, and applicants, while continuing to enable locally responsive alcohol licensing and policy processes.

This submission outlines Council's support for aspects of the Bill that strengthen local alcohol regulation, alongside comments on areas where further refinement would support the

amendments to be workable, proportionate, and aligned with the broader local government framework.

Council's feedback is informed by its regulatory (both compliance and monitoring) experience and its statutory responsibilities to promote the sale and supply of alcohol in a safe and responsible manner.

### **Council Position**

Council supports the overall intent of the Bill to strengthen the effectiveness of the alcohol regulatory framework and to reduce alcohol related harm within communities. Council considers that public health and community wellbeing objectives must remain central to alcohol regulation, particularly as population growth and urban development increase exposure to alcohol availability and associated impacts.

Council supports the Bill's focus on improving certainty and consistency in regulatory processes, noting that ambiguity in the current framework can place pressure on councils, District Licensing Committees (DLCs), and community stakeholders. Measures that strengthen the role of evidence, clarify expectations, and enable more proportionate decision making are supported.

Council has considered the practical implications of the changes in the Bill and outlines its position on the specific areas below, recognising the importance of ensuring changes to alcohol regulation are evidence based, enforceable, and aligned with harm reduction objectives.

#### **1. Hairdressers Permitted to Serve Alcohol**

Council does not support this proposal as currently written and recommends not proceeding without clearer evidence and safeguards. Council is not aware of evidence demonstrating benefits to business viability or community wellbeing, and considers the proposed limits lack sufficient clarity to be monitored or enforced consistently.

If the provision is progressed, Council recommends additional controls, including measured pours and standardised glass sizes, the presence of a trained person able to identify and manage intoxication, and enforceable limits of one serve per customer per visit. Without these safeguards, Council considers compliance and enforcement would be impractical.

## **2. Tasting Provisions**

Council supports the intent of the Bill and recommends that tasting provisions include clearly defined limits, including a maximum volume per tasting and a maximum number of tastings per customer. Council considers this clarity is necessary to support consistent compliance, effective enforcement, and to avoid unintended increases in alcohol consumption.

## **3. Home Delivery Services**

Council supports stronger regulation of alcohol home delivery services and recommends legislative changes that clearly assign responsibility for compliance and introduce mandatory, documented training for delivery personnel. Council considers this is critical to managing intoxication and underage access risks, given delivery drivers are frequently the final point of control in the supply chain.

## **4. Restrictions on Objections**

Council supports restricting objections to those with a local connection but is concerned that the proposed threshold may exclude individuals and communities who are within a realistic walking distance of a licensed premise, and who may experience associated noise, antisocial behaviour or amenity impacts, including where those impacts are felt across territorial authority boundaries. In these situations, residents and users of nearby areas may be no less affected simply because they fall outside the defined distance or the relevant district boundary.

Council therefore supports a broader and more flexible definition of local proximity that better reflects actual patterns of movement, lived experience and the nature of effects, rather than relying on a fixed kilometre-based limit. This would help ensure that those who are reasonably affected are not unintentionally excluded from the objection process.

## **5. Restaurants Selling Alcohol for Takeaway**

Council does not support proposals allowing restaurants to sell alcohol for off-site consumption. Council considers this change would further increase alcohol availability and risks creating de facto off-licence operations without the regulatory controls typically associated with that licence category. Council notes that no clear harm reduction benefit has been demonstrated and is concerned that this proposal could undermine locally managed alcohol availability settings.

## **6. Clubs Holding On-Licenses**

Council recommends that the proposed amendments enabling clubs to hold on-licenses not be progressed until it is further considered. Council considers the proposal would

fundamentally alter the nature of club licensing, expand public access to alcohol, and increase availability in a way that risks undermining the purpose of the club licence framework and existing local controls. Council is not persuaded that clear public interest or harm reduction justifications have been adequately demonstrated.

### **Conclusion**

Council supports the intent of the Bill to strengthen and modernise the alcohol regulatory framework and address long standing issues within the current regime. Council considers that public health and the minimisation of alcohol related harm must remain central to any legislative change, particularly in high growth districts experiencing increasing alcohol availability.

Council's feedback is informed by its statutory responsibilities and practical experience administering and enforcing the Act across diverse communities. While Council supports amendments that improve clarity, consistency, and proportionality, it considers that changes must be evidence based, enforceable in practice, and supported by appropriate safeguards to avoid unintended harm.

Council urges the Justice Committee to progress provisions that strengthen harm reduction and regulatory certainty, while refining or reconsidering proposals that risk increasing alcohol availability or undermining local oversight. Council welcomes continued engagement as the Bill progresses.

### **Further information and Hearing**

1. Should the Justice Committee require clarification on the submission please contact Manager Regulatory Services, Rochelle Deane, [Rochelle.Deane@waikatodc.govt.nz](mailto:Rochelle.Deane@waikatodc.govt.nz).
2. Waikato District Council representatives do not wish to speak at the Justice Committee hearing.

Ngaa mihi,



**Aksel Bech**  
**Mayor**

### **Council Approval and Reference**

This submission was approved by the Mayor and Chairs Forum on 13 May 2026.