



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Public Meeting: Alcoholics Anonymous NZ Celebrates 70-year Milestone**

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) group in New Zealand. To mark the occasion, a special celebration will be held at Takapuna Grammar School on 30 June 2018 at 2:00pm.

The first official A.A. group meeting took place on Auckland's North Shore in June 1948, in dentist Alf Joughin's Devonport surgery. Alf is remembered as a "real gentleman", always smartly dressed with a colourful bow tie, and passionate about helping others recover from the disease of alcoholism. Alf's message of hope helped many to remain sober for decades; one for 63 years so far.

There are now 464 weekly meetings of A.A. groups in New Zealand, with more than a quarter (139) held in Auckland every week. There are an estimated 4,000 successfully recovering members of A.A. nationwide. In 2016, there were estimated to be 2.1 million members of A.A. in 118,000 groups all around the world.

The Ministry of Health's New Zealand Health Survey<sup>i</sup> in 2015-16 indicated that about one in five (21%) New Zealand adults, nearly one million people, had a hazardous drinking pattern. It also revealed that 44% of New Zealand men and 30% of women aged between 18 and 24-years old, engaged in hazardous drinking.

Alcoholism crosses social, economic, age and gender boundaries. People from all walks of life find that drinking is costing them more than money. For each alcoholic who stops drinking, untold numbers of families, friends, neighbours and employers, as well as healthcare, psychiatric, social and probation professionals also benefit.

The Takapuna Grammar School venue was chosen as the closest venue to the first Devonport meeting, which could accommodate such a huge celebration. The public are welcome to attend and hear more about the history of A.A. in New Zealand, and to find out how these ex-problem drinkers now live happy, healthy lives by supporting each other through a mutual understanding of their challenges.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/annual-update-key-results-2015-16-nzhs-dec16-v2.pdf>