

KZN to allow Sunday alcohol sales

KwaZulu-Natal has joined Gauteng and the Western Cape in allowing liquor to be sold on Sundays, only a few months after the central government's Department of Health said it would intensify its efforts to curb alcohol abuse by banning advertising.



Alcohol abuse is costing the South African economy billions. Image: Nicholas Tarling [Free Digital Photos](#)

In December, the health ministry said it planned to commission an independent assessment of its plan to ban the advertising of alcohol products. This has been fiercely opposed by the liquor industry, media and sporting bodies.

KwaZulu-Natal economic development and tourism MEC Mike Mabuyakhulu said that the KwaZulu-Natal Liquor Licensing Act, passed in September, would come into effect from March.

Gauteng and the Western Cape allow retail liquor trade on Sundays, but have said they would introduce restrictions to limit alcohol abuse.

Mabuyakhulu said KwaZuluNatal hoped the act would facilitate entry of new participants in the industry, diversity of ownership and create more jobs.

"We have no doubt that all of you will agree with me that the control and regulation of liquor in our province and indeed in our country is in the national interest," said Mabuyakhulu. "We are all aware the abuse of liquor continues to be a contributory factor to many unnecessary deaths and acts of violence," he added.

Cost to economy

A study published earlier this month in the South African Medical Journal showed that alcohol abuse cost the economy at least R246bn, or 10% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009, against a R93.2bn or 4.4% contribution.

The new KwaZulu-Natal act prohibits the sale of alcohol within 500m of schools and churches.

According to Mabuyakhulu, research had found that of the 7,937 liquor traders registered in KwaZulu-Natal, 974 traded within 500m of schools.

"We will also ensure that all those traders who are trading in non-trading zones are relocated," Mabuyakhulu said.

The chief executive of the KwaZulu-Natal's Liquor Board, Stella Khumalo, said the process of enacting the new law had taken 12 years.

"We are happy this has finally succeeded after a lot of hard work. We will work together with the government, traders and other stakeholders to improve the services we render," she said.

The owner of a bottle store in Isipingo, south of Durban, Prega Naidoo, said traders had been waiting for this for a long time.

"The law forcing closure on Sunday was unnecessary because many people drank on Sunday, and they bought liquor at other places so that they can drink," she said. A liquor trader from Pietermaritzburg, Ziphohle Mtshali, said: "Personally, I don't think opening on Sunday would make more people drink."

However, some religious leaders have been more critical of the move. Sizwe Nkomo, a Nazareth Baptist Church priest, said the government had to take responsibility for the negative effects of alcohol abuse, such as broken families, alcohol-related accidents and killings.

Source: Business Day via I-net Bridge

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