

# Healthy Nations Empowered Communities

A collaborative initiative in Southern African countries, SAAPA is a network which aims to ensure that civil society plays a role in addressing the challenge of harmonising and accelerating alcohol policy development in the region.



## MEMORANDUM TO BP SOUTH AFRICA – 1 SEPTEMBER 2021

The Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance in SA (SAAPA SA) urges BP to rethink its decision to sell alcohol from its forecourt shops. SAAPA SA has noted the awarding of a liquor licence to the Pick n Pay forecourt shop on the premises of a BP petrol station in Radiokop, Johannesburg. We have also noted the applications by forecourt shops at three more BP petrol stations in Gauteng and two in the Western Cape. In response to a set of questions from SAAPA SA and to requests for comment by the media, BP has made it clear that it intends to continue to pursue applying for such licences going forward.

SAAPA SA are aware that this is not happening in isolation from developments around the world. BP has applied for, and been awarded, similar licences in other parts of the world, sometimes in the face of fierce opposition from local communities e.g. the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and some states in the US. We are also aware that this forms part a general trend towards seeing forecourt shops as one-stop shopping destinations for people who are buying fuel.

As public health researchers, practitioners and service providers we are concerned that alcohol sales from petrol station forecourt shops could:

### **1. Increase a culture of drinking and then driving or drinking while driving**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Global status reports on alcohol and health include sales from petrol stations as one of 20 measures to assess countries' public health orientated alcohol policies. The WHO has noted that a number of countries in the world do not allow such licences because they are worried that there will be an increase in alcohol-related traffic incidents as a result of drink driving. SA already has one of the highest car crash rates globally, 58% of which are alcohol-related.

### **2. Increase availability of alcohol**

The sale of alcohol from petrol stations could significantly increase the number of outlets by up to 5 000 if all petrol stations should apply for a liquor license. This increases the existing problem of availability of alcohol in South Africa. Currently, there are over 180 000 legal outlets and an estimated 180 000 – 250 000 unlicensed outlets in South Africa. It is this kind of availability which drives our binge drinking culture and alcohol attributable harm at a cost of 10-12% of GDP annually.

### **3. Increase children's exposure to alcohol and 'normalisation' of alcohol use as a lifestyle**

Petrol station shops are also visited by children and the advertising and sale of alcohol from these forecourt shops will further 'normalise' the use of alcohol in our country, promote alcohol

**SAAPA SA Alliance Partners:** Cancer Association of SA | Hlanganisa Institute for Development SA | People's Health Movement of SA | Sonke Gender Justice | Chidline | Children's Institute | Childsafe SA | Gateway Health Institute | GunFree SA | Kensington Residents & Ratepayers Association | Khayelitsha Health Forum | National Council Against Smoking | Observatory Civic Association | Paediatrics, UCT | People Opposed to Women Abuse | Save the Children SA | Skeem Foundation | Smoking & Alcohol Harms Alleviation & Rehabilitation Association | Sophiatown Community Psychological Services | Soul City Institute for Social Justice | South Africans Against Drinking and Driving | Teddy Bear Foundation for Abused Children | Yeoville Bellevue Ratepayers Association

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consumption as a lifestyle and ‘groom’ children for a life of drinking alcohol once they reach the legal age. Currently, only 31% of South Africans drink alcohol. However, 60% of these drink in a dangerous way, with annual consumption levels of pure alcohol that position us as sixth highest consumers of alcohol in the world per capita amongst drinkers.

**4. Increase marketing of alcohol**

Business practice includes advertising and promotions. It is likely that the business model of selling alcohol from petrol stations will include marketing via billboards, print and electronic media. This will further expose children to alcohol. International literature has shown that advertising increases children’s early initiation to drink alcohol and encourages binge drinking amongst young people.

**5. Squeeze out more small, independent businesses**

While we are aware that all Pick n Pay Express shops are franchises, Pick n Pay and BP are beneficiaries of the trade done by these outlets. As a multi-national, BP will therefore extend their footprint at a cost to small, individually and family-owned community businesses, undermining the efforts of small entrepreneurs to make a success of those businesses.

A comparative example is the impact of allowing supermarkets to own fully-fledged bottle stores.

According to Who Owns Whom 2017, this has resulted in the closure of 70% of small liquor retailers and the loss of 60 000 jobs. In a country with high unemployment worsened by COVID, SMME’s need to be encouraged, not squeezed out of the market by big conglomerates.

**6. Extend to become fully licensed liquor outlets**

SAAPA SA are aware that, for now, these outlets are only applying for Grocer’s Licences, meaning they can only sell wine. However, this is not the case in some countries in the world where forecourt shops can sell the full range of alcoholic beverages – beers, ciders, wines and spirits. Our concern is that, once the selling of wine has become the norm, the forecourt shops, like supermarkets before them, will begin to apply for full liquor licences to sell all alcoholic beverages.

The South African government has aligned itself with the *WHO Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, 2016* and its subsequent cautionaries on the issue of petrol station premises having liquor licences. This is reflected in the National Liquor Policy, 2016, which promotes the WHO ‘best buys’ to reduce alcohol harm and also recommends that petrol station premises should not be granted liquor licences. This position is strengthened in the Liquor Amendment Bill, 2016, which specifically forbids the awarding of such licences. While the fact that the Bill has not yet been passed is a problem, this does not diminish the sentiment of the Liquor Policy and the Amendment Bill, both of which were approved by Cabinet, with respect to this issue.

Furthermore, SAAPA SA has noted that some provinces have taken a decision that premises at or near petrol station shouldn’t have liquor licences. This is significant because provinces are responsible for the issuing of retail liquor licences. We believe there should be uniformity across the country and that all provinces should align themselves with the position of national government.

**SAAPA SA therefore:**

- Calls on BP to recognise and understand the potential problems arising from selling alcohol from petrol stations.
- Calls on BP to take the moral high ground as a multi-national company and leader in the petroleum industry to act in the interest of the common good, development and public health.
- Calls on BP to rescind its decision to apply for liquor licences, and thereby increase its status as a company committed to the well-being of their customers.

Received for BP by:

Signature:

Date: