

Evaluation of Wanaka Alcohol Group
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September 2019

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Wanaka Alcohol Group for the guidance and direction given in this research, specifically Kate Murray and Bronwyn Coers. We thank the participants for their willingness, honesty and time to contribute to the research. This evaluation was funded by a Lottery Community Sector research grant.

Executive Summary

Wanaka Alcohol Group (WAG) is a collaboration of a variety of community stakeholders from the Upper Clutha region. The group was formed in 2013 to ensure an ongoing conversation about alcohol and drug behaviour, particularly relating to youth in the community. In April 2019 WAG became an incorporated society.

WAG has conducted a range of research since its inception including research into alcohol use in Wanaka from a student perspective in 2016, a survey of parents in 2017 and a repeat survey of students in 2018.

This evaluation was conducted to understand the impact WAG's work is having in the Upper Clutha region. The intent of the evaluation was to also generate information that will guide the direction of future activities.

The evaluation consisted of a document review, Theory of Change development, key informant interviews and a repeat of the parents' survey.

The document review of previous research shows the development of WAG's activities. From originally being focussed on youth and youth drinking, the 'Harming Me Harming You' report highlighted the impact of parental attitudes and behaviour on youth drinking. This led to a wider focus on family drinking. The first parents' survey in 2018 then led to a further wider focus with community level activities being introduced.

The second student survey shows some positive changes in behaviour for student drinking and that some messages on alcohol harm were getting through. However, there has been a shift from parental supply to friend supply being the most common and significantly more Year 10 students were drinking spirits in 2018, relative to their counterparts.

The Theory of Change guided the evaluation and was used as a way of reflecting on what had been achieved to date. It can also be used to lay the foundation for future work.

From the key informant interviews, the key successes of WAG's work to date are the parenting evenings, and the Brainwave Trust seminars, and the research report 'Harming Me, Harming You'. Other successes noted are the Cork Bar and Recreation Centre submission to QLDC, the business forum and the support for the MAC after-ball party.

Key informant interviewees were asked to provide some thoughts on future direction for WAG, based on what they knew of WAG's work and what they believed had been effective. A clearly identified opportunity was expanding the reach of the parenting evenings and events. A focus on supporting youth to speak to youth was also recommended.

A clear message from interviewees was that WAG needed to be more visible, at events and in the community, both from a marketing perspective but also so that WAG can make informed decisions. Clarity on WAG's vision and strategic direction was sought. Opportunities for advocacy work and acting as a facilitator of community discussion were suggested.

The recommendations from this evaluation are:

- That WAG clarifies its vision and mission and markets itself better in the community. It can either spend time and effort in developing its own brand and marketing this or supporting complementary groups such as The Friends of MAC and Students Against Drunk Driving more.
- That WAG supports youth-led initiatives such as those using drama and stories to influence youth in alcohol harm reduction and address issues of social supply.
- That WAG continues to support parents with education and information events as well as providing resources. There needs to be a regular and structured programme that aims to increase the reach to more parents through diversifying events and venues.
- That WAG continues to conduct the student and parent surveys to gain an understanding of the community's attitude to alcohol consumption.

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Background

The Wanaka Alcohol Group (WAG) was formed by community members in 2013 in response to a series of serious incidents involving heavy drinking and harm to local youth. Initially called YATA (Youth Access To Alcohol), the group had a focus on youth and families. In the past five years, WAG has engaged in research, community education, advocacy and some events.

WAG is a collaborative entity representing a variety of community stakeholders including the Wanaka Community Board, Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), Mount Aspiring College (MAC), Friends of MAC (parent group), Parenting 4 Life, Community Networks, Police, Alpine Community Development Trust, Southern District Health Board, WellSouth, SADD, ACC and Kahu Youth Trust. The group was formed to ensure an ongoing conversation about alcohol and drug behaviour, particularly relating to youth in the community.

In April 2019 WAG became an incorporated society with the following objectives:

- Reduce alcohol and other drug related harm in the Upper Clutha region;
- Raise awareness in the community of the health risks associated with the consumption of alcohol and other drugs;
- Use a consistent and verifiable approach to the collection and use of data relating to use of alcohol and drugs in the community;
- Work with health, social services, government agencies and the business community to influence decision makers and introduce policies to reduce alcohol and other drug related harm;
- Work with Mount Aspiring College to create a healthy attitude among students to the use of alcohol and other drugs;
- Promote and support of alcohol-free events.

WAG has been operating for five years now and it is time to assess the effectiveness of their work and its outcomes.

Evaluation purpose

An outcome evaluation was conducted to provide information to WAG that will help them understand the impact their work is having in the Upper Clutha. The intent of the evaluation was to also generate information that will guide the direction of future activities.

Specifically, the evaluation will:

- Provide independent information from a range of sources to inform continuous improvement of WAG's work
- Provide information to support requests for assistance from funders and stakeholders, and to increase community support of WAG's work

Evaluation approach

A range of data collection methods were used, with both quantitative and qualitative data collected and analysed concurrently.

The evaluation team followed the ANZEA Evaluation Standards and Evaluator Competencies guidelines in conducting the research.

The evaluation was conducted with reference to “Ethical Guidelines for Observational Studies: Observational research, audits and related activities 2012” (issued by the National Ethics Advisory Committee).

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was used with document review, Theory of Change, key informant interviews and an online survey.

Document Review

A document review was conducted of research previously conducted. Previous research conducted has been:

- Hammond, V. & Cassaidy, R. (2016) *Harming Me, Harming You: A community perspective of alcohol use in Wanaka*

This mixed methods research was conducted using an online survey to students Years 9-11, focus groups with students and key informant interviews. The survey followed the Youth 12 methodology, a nationally representative health and wellbeing survey of New Zealand secondary school students.

- Beavis, B. (2018) *A Parent’s Perspective: A parental perspective of young people’s alcohol use in Wanaka*

An online survey was conducted of parents of Years 9-13 at Mount Aspiring College in Wanaka. One hundred and thirty-three parents responded to the survey. Results were analysed thematically.

- Hammond, V. (2018) *Harming me, Harming you: Student Health & Wellbeing Survey Update 2018*

The 2016 Health and Wellbeing Survey was repeated with the Year 9-11 students. A few extra questions were added about exposure to WAG’s activities. Two hundred and eighty-five students completed the survey.

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change is an illustration or description of how and why a change is expected to occur. It maps out the path between activities and initiatives to the long-term goals that are desired¹.

A Theory of Change was workshopped with the WAG members at meetings in March and April 2019. This Theory of Change guided the evaluation and was used as a way of reflecting on what had been achieved to date. It can also be used to lay the foundation for future work.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who have first-hand knowledge about their community. These experts were asked to share their insights about the work of WAG and give recommendations for future focus. The inclusion criteria for key informants was that they were aware of the work of WAG. Initial recommendations of informants were given by WAG and then others were recommended by the informants themselves.

Between June and August 2019, 14 semi-structured key informant interviews were undertaken. A number of interviewees were representing both their professions as well as being parents of students at MAC, and had connections with WAG in both facets. Interviewees were from: Queenstown Lakes District Council (n=4), Mount Aspiring College (n=3), Wanaka Community Board (n=1), community patrol (n=1), youth-focussed trusts (n=3), police (n=2), business owner (n=1) and parents (n=2); a total of 17 interviewees. Two interviews were conducted by phone and the other 12 in person. Consent forms were signed (or consent given verbally) by interviewees and permission given to use quotes anonymously by all.

The qualitative key informant data was analysed using common themes.

Survey

A parents' survey was conducted concurrently with the interviews. This was a second survey following on from the first survey conducted in April 2018. Questions were updated and an additional set of evaluation questions focussed on the work of WAG were added. In total, 211 parents completed the survey, a response rate of 37%. The full results of this survey were published separately.

¹ www.theoryofchange.org

Findings

Summary of results from qualitative research

Document review

Findings from the previous research are summarised.

- Hammond, V. & Cassaidy, R. (2016) Harming Me, Harming You: A community perspective of alcohol use in Wanaka

This research found that, in general, for Year 9-11 students Wanaka females drink less regularly than their national counterparts and Wanaka males. Of the then current students 31 (36% of current drinkers) had binge drunk in the previous four weeks. All but one were in Year 11.

For Year 11 Wanaka students, 30% of all drinkers reported binge drinking, compared with approximately 21% of all NZ Year 11 students who drank. 28% of Year 9-11 Wanaka students were drinking regularly with many of them binge drinking with the intent to get drunk. A key source of supply was their parents.

Students were aware of the risks of drinking from unsafe sex, injury, delinquent behaviour and reputational damage. Students wanted alternatives to drinking such as weekend outdoor activities. The research also found that there was a high local prevalence of adults aged over 40 and older drinking excessively. A refocus for WAG was recommended from youth drinking to family drinking. To address adult drinking reducing alcohol availability, offering more addiction services and more support for new families to the area were suggested by stakeholders. Additionally, health education for parents on the impact of alcohol was recommended.

- Beavis, B. (2018) A Parent's Perspective: A parental perspective of young people's alcohol use in Wanaka

The survey found that the majority of parents were comfortable with their young person consuming alcohol from the age of 16. Over half of the parents that responded to the survey supplied alcohol to their young person. The research concluded that alcohol harm reduction interventions need to have a community objective of decoupling alcohol with normalisation. Four key strategic areas were recommended; change social norms, educating families about alcohol harm and equipping with strategies including increased communication between parents, information nights for parents, and advocating to QLDC around reducing alcohol consumption, and working with outlet owners.

- Hammond, V. (2018) Harming me, Harming you: Student Health & Wellbeing Survey Update 2018

The survey found that the prevalence of drinking amongst Year 9-11 remained high at 31% with 35% reporting binge drinking. The prevalence of drinking and binge drinking had not changed significantly between the 2016 and 2018 surveys. However, students reported drinking less frequently. In 2018 the Year 11 group were less accepting of alcohol use by people their age, and fewer reported alcohol use by friends. Although not statistically significant, fewer had ever tried alcohol or were current

drinkers. With regards to supply, friends replaced parents as the most common source of alcohol with 66% in 2018 getting alcohol from friends compared with 35% in 2016.

Most students (71%) recalled seeing or hearing alcohol messages around drink driving and brain development in the community. Of those that recalled alcohol messages up to 24% felt they were relevant to them and their family, up to 23% stated that they helped their family talk about alcohol, and up to 32% said they changed the way they think about alcohol.

The review of previous research shows the development of WAG's activities. From originally being focussed on youth and youth drinking, the 'Harming Me Harming You' report highlighted the impact of parental attitudes and behaviour on youth drinking. This led to a wider focus on family drinking. The first Parents' Survey in 2018 then led to a further wider focus with community level activities being introduced.

The second Student Survey shows some positive changes in behaviour for student drinking and that some message of alcohol harm are getting through. However, there has been a shift from parental supply to friend supply being the most common, and significantly more Year 10 students were drinking spirits in 2018, relative to their counterparts.

Parents' Survey findings

The full Parents' Survey report is presented separately, but in summary, parental alcohol supply to underage teenagers does not appear to be a frequent practice. Only a minority of parents had recently supplied their oldest teenager, and when they had, it tended to be limited to 1–2 drinks. Although the numbers are small there is some indication that parents supply more alcohol to drink in unsupervised occasions. There is disagreement between student reports of friend supply in 2018, and parental acknowledgment of this source in the 2019, suggesting that parents may not realise the true amount their teenagers are drinking on a typical occasion. The 2019 parents had more permissive attitudes towards unsupervised underage drinking than their 2017 counterparts. However, this did not translate to increased underage supply, which remained unchanged between surveys. The most common sources of pressure to supply alcohol were society in general and the parents' own teenager(s).

Overall, the results of this survey support the conclusions of the first parent survey, in that social supply needs to be looked at in the broader community. Together, the four surveys conducted so far indicate that some positive changes around drinking attitudes and behaviour have occurred. With the surge in social supply by friends reported by students in 2018, but not acknowledged by many parents in 2019, it seems work could be done in extending social supply campaigns beyond parents.

Information was also gathered as part of the survey on the activities of WAG. Of the activities that parents were aware of the research was the most well-known at 59% (n=77). The next most known were the information given in The Messenger 55% (n=71) and then the parenting resources 46% (n=65).

Key Informant Interviews and Parents' Survey

Key informants were asked about the work of WAG that they knew about and what they thought the impacts were. According to the informants, the key successes of WAG's work to date are the parenting evenings and the Brainwave Trust seminars, and the research report 'Harming Me, Harming You'. Other successes noted are the Cork Bar and Recreation Centre submission to QLDC, the business forum and the support for the MAC after-ball party.

Parents/caregivers

The Parenting 101 forums were held at MAC and had a panel of community experts (police, school counsellor, health nurse etc.) speaking about different parenting issues. Parents felt well prepared to address alcohol issues with their teenagers. The seminars by the Brainwave Trust were particularly appreciated for providing a scientific background to brain development and the impact of alcohol and drug consumption.

It was noted by a few interviewees that the parents attending the parenting evenings were generally the already engaged parents and that there were a number of parents not attending.

Results from the 2019 parents' survey showed that 20% (n=45) had attended the Parenting 101 evening². Of those that had attended the evenings 29% (n=13) rated the evenings as excellent, 55% (n=25) very good, 13% (n=6) good and 2% (n=1) as poor. Slightly more had attended the Brainwave seminars with 23% attending (n=51), with 57% (n=29) rating them excellent and 33% very good (n=17).

Whilst the focus has been on parents of MAC students a number of parents acknowledged that children learn their behaviour in relation to alcohol from a very young age at home. There was a sense that general parental education could begin earlier to support parents of younger children.

Advocacy

WAG was one of a group of organisations that made a submission to QLDC regarding an application by Cork Bar to extend their hours of trading until 4am. The submission held weight given that it was from a representative group within the community and provided a community voice. It was considered that if the application had gone through a number of bars would have extended their hours by now and so this was a significant achievement for WAG.

Alternative opinions were that the Cork Bar never intended to be open until 4am regularly but just on special occasions. Questions were asked whether longer hours are going to increase the levels of alcoholism in the community. The general sense was that currently there isn't the customer demand to have more bars open for longer.

² It should be noted that parents of Year 9 students who completed the survey were not invited to attend the Parenting 101 events in 2018 and also that parents of Year 13 students that might have attended were not asked to complete the survey. Therefore, this figure is an estimate.

Business owners

WAG ran two forums aimed at engaging with off and on license holders. The second forum was attended by community service organisations such as Wanaka Police, Hospitality NZ, taxi business owners and QLDC license regulators. It was felt by some of the informants that benefits of these forums were more for WAG than the business community. However, one of the informants did feel there was some opportunity for these forums to develop into something useful for all parties. Wide representation at the forums would also be beneficial e.g. business owners, police, tourist sector, QLDC etc.

QLDC does run information sessions for business owners and potentially the scope of these could be widened to become educational and develop more of a community-wide approach.

Youth

WAG has supported the MAC after-ball party by providing water and pizzas, plus working with the organising committee to provide guidelines on how much alcohol the students can supply. Some parents interviewed were unhappy with the permission forms sent home with students regarding drinking alcohol at the after-ball party. The forms didn't offer the option for parents to express that they did not want their student drinking at the party. Overall though, the support was appreciated and those that attended the event felt it was well run.

Drink driving

A number of people mentioned drink driving as their key concern regarding alcohol in the community. There was concern not just about youth drink driving but all age groups. For some, it was the potential harm for young people from serious accidents, but also damage to careers and their future should they be convicted. Helping young people understand their limits was seen as valuable education. One person noted that some craft beers show levels of alcohol in drinks allowing consumers to work out what they could drink. Whilst this wasn't necessarily the point of marketing the alcohol content, it could be considered an indirect benefit.

Concerns were raised over the lack of police presence after hours in the week days and the 'freedom' this gave people to drive home knowingly over the limit.

Research

The 'Harming Me Harming You' report was considered a good piece of research that provided some clear recommendations for WAG's work. For some it also validated some opinions on the alcohol consumption in the area i.e. that it was not excessively high compared to national statistics. It was felt that good recommendations had been provided in all the research conducted to date and that it was important for WAG to follow up on these.

It was acknowledged that a group such as WAG is unique within a community and many parents in the survey expressed their gratitude for the work being done.

I think WAG is a great resource in the community. Thank you for the work you do. We don't have an issue at this stage, but should our circumstances with our children change it is good to know Wanaka has a strong group/resource to fall back on. (Parents' Survey 2019)

Keep up the good work! It's a tough job nudging society to healthier behaviour around alcohol. Thank you. (Parents' Survey 2019)

Opportunities

As part of the key informant interviews the interviewees were asked to provide some thoughts on future direction for WAG, based on what they knew of WAG's work and what they believed had been effective.

A clear opportunity was expanding the reach of the Parenting 101 forums and events. Specifically targeting the parents who are undecided on how they will address alcohol with their teenagers or are unprepared to talk about it. Suggestions included running smaller sessions at other venues than the school, such as sports clubs. Also providing more resources for parents such as guidelines for running parties etc. Panel sessions with both parents and youth talking about key issues have been successful in the past in Queenstown.

The survey also asked parents where they thought WAG should focus its work. Of those that responded (this was different for each option); 92% (n=132) requested youth-led events, 81% (n=93) providing resources for parents, 79% (n=85) research in the community, 76% (n=88) alcohol-free events, 75% creating dances or dramas about making healthy choices and 73% (n=85) petitioning QLDC around issues relating to access to alcohol.

A focus on supporting youth to speak to youth was the highest recommendation. Suggestions included:

- Having some youth that have had some experience of the harm alcohol can bring to their lives speak to youth. A recent example in the community is of a young man whose international sports career is now in jeopardy due to a drunk driving charge.
- Using drama or film to challenge young people. Previously, the QLDC had a project where a short advert was made by youth to talk about looking after friends. Also, stories had been collected to create a drama. The power of people's stories to speak to others was highlighted a few times.
- Supporting alcohol-free places for youth, including seasonal workers, to hang out in the weekends.
- Another opportunity is through the organisation Red Frogs that provides patron support to QLDC over the New Year's celebrations. This group is a Christian-based youth-led volunteer group that has young people trained to go and support those struggling during the celebrations. They specifically look for people who are alone and have become separated from their friends, as this is the time when people are vulnerable to harm. In 2018 they worked alongside St Johns medical staff on the 31st December and saw over 30 people receive medical help. Supporting local youth to be part of this group is an opportunity for youth to see first-hand the impacts of alcohol. This group also offers a programme in schools which talks to youth about looking after each other over the summer holidays.

A clear message was that WAG needed to be more visible, at events and in the community, both from a marketing perspective but also to be able to make informed decisions. A number of the

parents that were interviewed for their professional connections to WAG were unaware that the events they had attended were run by WAG. Some clear marketing and promotion was recommended, along with a clear vision and strategic direction.

I don't actually know exactly what WAGs mission statement is?? I understand it to be a 'zero-tolerance, dissuade approach' for the kids? I actually think a little exposure, in a controlled home environment is the safest way of learning and understanding (Parents Survey 2019)

Additionally, understanding the community better through attending events, supporting the QLDC licensing team in their visits, talking to bar owners and going out with the community patrol, was strongly recommended by interviewees.

A number of opportunities to work alongside the Wanaka Community Board were suggested, including making submissions on relevant policies or bylaws being consulted on such as; the opening hours policy, special reserves and alcohol-free bans. There is a need for an independent voice to facilitate discussions on such issues.

Another potential area of work that the Wanaka Community Board might need support in is the use of sports facilities and alcohol consumption. There is need for the wider community discussion about alcohol and sports.

In summary, the uniqueness of WAG for the community was acknowledged and appreciated. It was acknowledged that there is a long history of excessive alcohol consumption in New Zealand and changing culture is hard work. The Parents' Survey had a number of comments of thanks to WAG for the work being done, especially for parents.

Keep doing your amazingness - parents/students can still be impacted in positive ways without attending/commenting your work (Parents' Survey 2019)

Recommendations

The key recommendations are based on the impact of WAG's work to date and the opportunities expressed during this research. Of key importance is the organisational development of WAG itself. Then the recommended areas of focus are youth-led activities and support for parents.

Opportunities also exist to support the work of the Wanaka Community Board and advocate on policy development should resources be available.

Organisational development

With the organisation newly incorporated and this evaluation work, it is recommended to clarify the vision and mission of the organisation. Given the limited resources and the fact that many of the current WAG members are there in a representative role, it is important to decide on the focus and be strategic. The Theory of Change, in conjunction with the constitution, is a useful document to help create a strategic plan for the organisation.

As far as marketing is concerned there are two options:

- Either work on developing the WAG brand (once the above has been clarified) and do some marketing within the community, including being present at events. It is important for WAG to be clear on the mission and vision for the organisation before this is done. There definitely is some confusion in the community over this, and possibly within WAG itself. This is mainly on the approach to alcohol i.e. is WAG promoting zero alcohol consumption? It is also about whether WAG is a youth-focussed organisation or working with the whole of the community. Potentially wider community support would be available to WAG once this is clarified (depending on the stance taken). If WAG is a zero-tolerance organisation then this support would be less likely.
- Alternatively, there are two main organisations that WAG could be a support for, The Friends of MAC and Students Against Drunk Driving. Instead of spending time developing a brand for WAG itself the organisation could use its resources and skills to run activities that complement and support these two groups.

Youth-led activities

Recognising the power of stories and that youth will be more likely to listen to youth, support for youth-led activities is highly recommended. Increased youth representation on WAG as well as seeking youth input on activities is encouraged. Working alongside youth organisations such as Kahu Youth, Red Frogs and Students Against Drunk Driving, will be important and the QLDC may be able to provide some support and experience. Improved resources and templates for the MAC after-ball party were also suggested by some interviewees.

The issues of social supply which has been highlighted in the 2019 Parents' Survey can be addressed in this way as well. Red Frogs offers a school programme that could assist in this area.

Supporting parents

The Parenting 101 evenings were very well received and appreciated by those that had attended. Regular events were requested and a focus on attracting those parents that are 'sitting on the fence' as far as alcohol issues are concerned is recommended. This could be running specific year group

events or holding the evenings at different locations within the community. An improved perception of WAG within the community could increase parent support for these evenings or information sessions. One parent requested an education evening on drugs and being able to recognise them (physically) as well as behaviour changes in young people that may indicate drug use. One suggestion that was raised was a Facebook page, a section on the Wanaka app or a website for parents in the Upper Clutha area that could have a wide range of parenting resources available.

Research

The research WAG has conducted over the years is widely appreciated and acknowledged. There is definite benefit to continue the student and parent surveys over alternate years as this provides a longitudinal picture of the community. The act of participating in a survey can also be considered an intervention in the sense that it encourages the respondents to look at their behaviours around alcohol.

Advocacy and working with policy makers

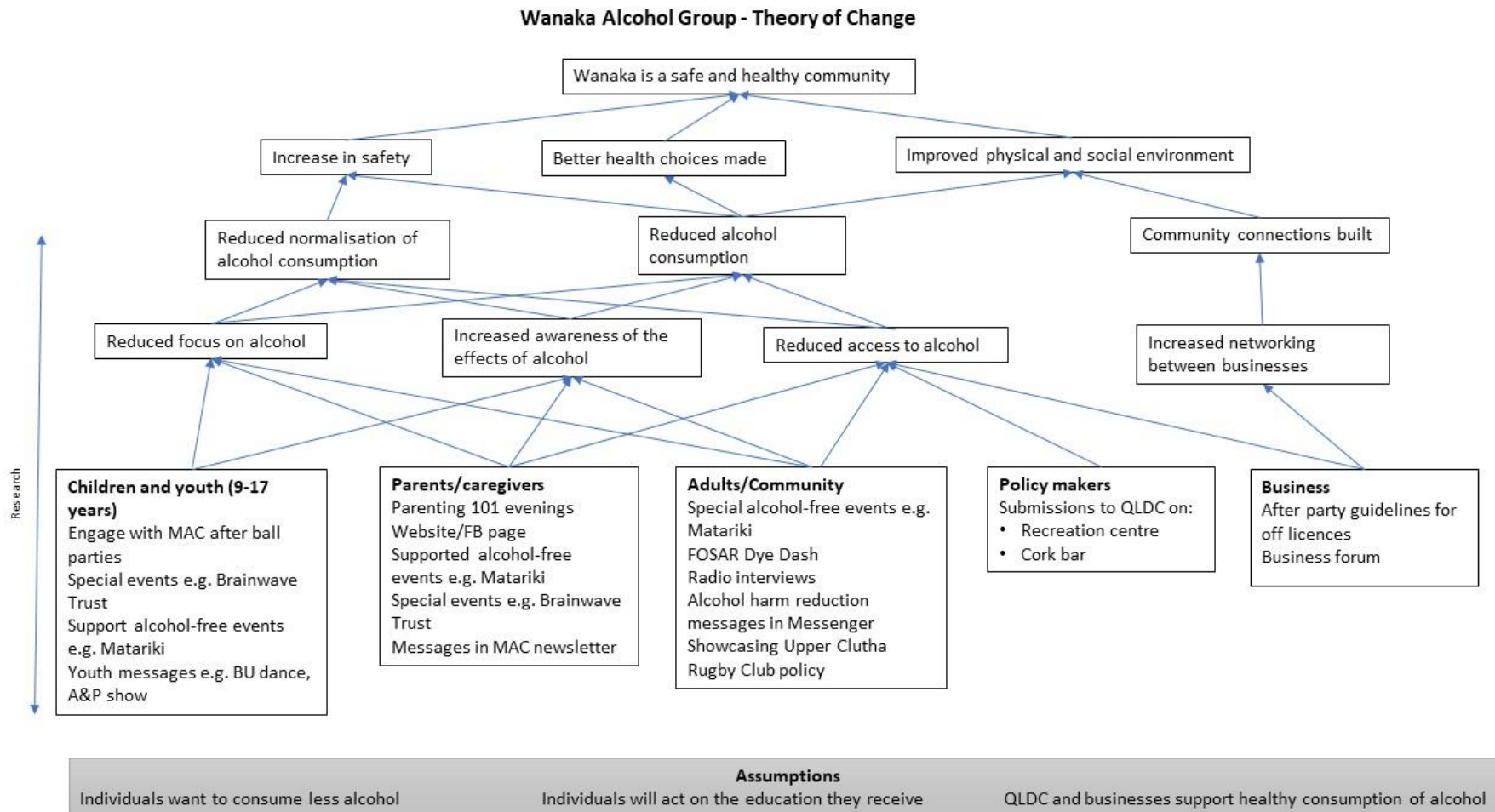
Opportunities do exist to work alongside the Wanaka Community Board and act as a facilitator of community discussions on issues relating to bylaws such as alcohol bans and smoke-free areas etc. Whether this is a role that WAG wants to take on is dependent on the strategic direction decided by the group. There may be other organisations within the community that could take up this role such as LINK Upper Clutha.

It should be noted though that there was real value in the WAG submission regarding the Cork Bar as a community group representing a range of community members.

Business owners

There was little support for the business forums by the key informants even though it was acknowledged that some support for open discussions might benefit the community as whole. This was not considered an area WAG had expertise in and is not an area recommended for WAG to work on in the future.

Appendix 1 - Theory of Change



Appendix 2 - Evaluation team

Anna Williams is an academically qualified evaluator with experience in international and local community development. Anna was responsible for conducting and analysing the qualitative work including the stakeholder interviews, the literature review, and facilitating the Theory of Change workshops.

Dr Vanessa Hammond is a highly-experienced Public Health researcher. As a member of the local community, she is experienced in conducting research with local people, groups and organisations. She has a deep knowledge of local context, culture and values. Dr Hammond conducted the baseline youth survey in 2016 and the repeat survey in 2018. Dr Hammond also conducted and analysed the 2019 parents' survey