



MEDIA RELEASE

Parliamentary committee recommends 'responsible supervision' when providing alcohol to minors

Inquiry report released today

12 September 2013

The NSW Parliament's Social Policy Committee has recommended that laws governing the provision of alcohol to minors by parents and guardians be strengthened.

Under the *Liquor Act 2007*, parents or guardians may provide alcohol to their child, and other adults may provide alcohol to a minor as long as they can prove they have parental authorisation. The Committee heard evidence that these laws are not well understood in the community and that there is not enough guidance about what is acceptable if a parent or guardian chooses to provide alcohol or authorise its supply. Some inquiry participants called for a blanket ban on parents and authorised adults providing alcohol to minors.

The Chair of the Committee, Mr Bruce Notley-Smith, explained: "There is great concern in the community about high levels of alcohol consumption, particularly by young people, and its long-term health effects. The use of alcohol is deeply ingrained in our society and its use differs widely across New South Wales. This is why we took the view that a blanket prohibition on providing alcohol to minors would be an unwelcome and unenforceable intrusion into the affairs of the family."

"There is no single solution to address the problems that come from excessive alcohol consumption, particularly among young people. We need an approach that balances the rights of parents to make private decisions about how to educate their children about alcohol with the community's expectation that adults should only give alcohol to young people in a responsible way. This is why we have recommended strengthening the law to require 'responsible supervision', and to promote education and clear public information."

He continued: "Our recommendation for a public education campaign would ensure parents and the community are aware of the legal and health consequences of providing alcohol to young people. This campaign - along with a dedicated website that provides clear information about the law - will help parents make informed decisions about their children's drinking." The Committee has also recommended that attendance at counselling sessions form part of the penalty regime for offences relating to the supply of alcohol to minors.

A copy of the report can be downloaded from www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/socialpolicy.

For further comment please contact Mr Bruce Notley-Smith MP on 02 9389 6669