

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS

QUESTION

Ms Anna Watson MP

The 12 to 17 age group that we are talking about, to my mind, what affects them most is seeing. As you know, we all learn in different ways, but visual learning is something that that particular age group is receptive to. You have seen the smoking campaign where they show the heart and the pumping out of different things from the veins and all that awful stuff. If it showed bleeding from the brain, or whatever are the effects of alcohol, although that is not very nurturing, it is very hard-hitting and in your face. Is that something that would be relevant and would they cope with that?

ANSWER

A study conducted in Victoria in 2010 by VicRoads *Young People's response to intended "shocking" road safety messages* found that while fear may appear to play a motivational role, prevention strategies are more likely to be an effective deterrent.

The evidence suggests that the use of graphic images that set out to shock, traumatise or evoke fear about the potential negative consequences of risky behaviour does not lead to lasting behavioural change. Messages designed to arouse fear or anxiety in young people rarely achieve what they intend to do and may even be harmful for some young people.

The factor most likely to influence attitudes, intentions and behaviours is not the level of threat, but the individual's perception of their own vulnerability to the threat.

In New South Wales schools, the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Years 7-10 syllabus, developed by the Board of Studies NSW, prescribes learning about the effects of drug use, including alcohol, consequences of use, prevalence and patterns of use, influences on use and binge drinking. Students also specifically learn about marketing strategies and media influences associated with alcohol.

Senior students in public schools participate in the mandatory course *Crossroads: A personal development and health education course for Stage 6 students*. Students explore contemporary drug-related issues in the community and the impact of these on individuals, the school, local communities and the wider community.

QUESTION

Mr Troy Grant MP

How many kids are suspended from school in New South Wales per annum? Do you have any statistics in relation to that? If you do, do you drill down or do you examine how many of those may be alcohol related or that may have the abuse or the use of alcohol tied to that suspension or a change in their behaviour?

ANSWER

Data relating to the suspension and expulsion of school students is reported on an annual basis by the Department of Education and Communities. The data can be found at:

<http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-us/plans-reports-and-statistics/key-statistics-and-reports>

Suspensions are classified in broad categories. These are:

Short Suspension (up to and including 4 school days)

- Continued disobedience
- Aggressive behavior.

Long Suspension (up to and including 20 school days);

- Physical violence
- Use or possession of a prohibited weapon, firearm or knife
- Possession or use of a suspected illegal substance
- Serious criminal behaviour related to the school
- Use of implement as a weapon
- Persistent or serious misbehaviour.

A disaggregation of suspension data by category is included in the published data.

QUESTION

Ms Anna Watson MP

Can you tell me the role that the school counsellor has played in the education of alcohol abuse of our minors? Will you give the Committee a little bit of an idea how widespread this issue is in schools in New South Wales?

ANSWER

School counsellors have been provided with training in motivational interviewing to build their capacity for supporting students at risk of drug (including alcohol) related harm. Training in motivational interviewing is delivered to school counsellors after their initial training has been applied and they have gained some experience in the role so they are better positioned to incorporate and evaluate this important counselling method.

Where necessary, school counsellors liaise with specialist practitioners to develop individual case management strategies and the work of the school counsellor and external provider is complementary.

Frequency data on alcohol use by students is not collated by the Department of Education and Communities. However, the NSW Ministry of Health has compiled the New South Wales Secondary School Students Health Behaviours Survey, one section of which addresses alcohol use.

QUESTION

Ms Anna Watson MP

This question is to either of the four of you. In your view is there a common thread or theme? Are some students more at risk than others and, if so, why, and have they been identified?

ANSWER

The New South Wales School Students Health Behaviours Survey was compiled by the NSW Ministry of Health among students aged 12-17 years and provides some data and information on young people at risk.

QUESTION

Mr Troy Grant MP

Every school has the opportunity to object when things are advertised under a development application within the local government area. Are there parameters that the education department would object to on subject matters that come in or near a school, and would alcohol advertising be one of these?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Communities has no influence over signage which is proposed or erected on land which is not under the control of the Department. The Department may be given the opportunity to comment on a development by the consenting authority for approving the development which is usually the local council.

QUESTION

Ms Anna Watson MP

It is delightful that 77% of kids under 17 have not had a drink. However how broad was that survey?

ANSWER

The survey referred to is titled the NSW Secondary School Students Health Behaviours Survey. In 2008, the NSW Department of Health conducted the third New South Wales Secondary Schools Health Behaviours Survey. Previous surveys were conducted in 2002 and 2005, as part of the triennial Australian School Students Alcohol and Drugs Survey, which began in 1984.

The results published in 2009 can be found at:

http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/PublicHealth/surveys/hss/08/toc/t_s04_methods.asp