

**Submission
No 9**

PROVISION OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS

Organisation: Life Education NSW
Name: Mr Jay Bacik
Position: Chief Executive Officer
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27 July 2012

Mr Bruce Notley-Smith MP
Committee Chair
Social Policy Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

For the attention of Ms Carrie Chan, Committee Inquiry Manager

Dear Sir

Inquiry into the provision of alcohol to minors

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important issue and our National Chairman, Mr Tony Hasham, AM, has asked me to respond as this is a State issue.

There would seem to be reasonable consensus, across our community that we need to address the significant issue of alcohol misuse. This includes reducing the use and abuse of alcohol by minors.

Legislation can be used as one effective tactic to educate, change attitudes, and assist parents and guardians in dealing with this issue.

Our recommendations on this issue are quite straightforward.

We refer to the very clear advice of the National Health and Medical Research Council, in relation to young people aged less than 15 years, that they should not drink alcohol at all. For this reason we believe parents should be prohibited from making alcohol available to minors in this age group. Penalties should be

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significant. While not suggesting that resources be deployed in enforcing this prohibition, parents would be aware that, in the event it becomes apparent that the legislation had been breached, these penalties would apply. Such a position, in law, coupled with complementary community education, would better enable parents to resist the pressures they face on numerous fronts to supply alcohol to this age group.

It may be considered appropriate to retain the discretion parents currently have to supply alcohol to their own children, given the above criteria. An extension of this would see parents retain the right to authorise other adults to do the same. In these circumstances, we would recommend placing clear restrictions around the exercise of this discretion by parents. The consumption of alcohol must be supervised by the parent or the authorised adult. The locations where consumption by minors is permitted should be limited to the private property of the parent or authorised adult. The amount consumed must be limited, consistent with the recommendations of the NHMRC. The responsibilities being assumed by the parent or the authorised adult need to be made clear. The penalties for breaching these responsibilities need to be significant.

In addition to penalising parents, we recommend consideration be given to penalising minors, that consume alcohol inconsistent with the above regime. For example, the opportunity to secure a drivers licence could be deferred or suspended.

We would also recommend a review of section 11 (1) of the Summary Offences Act which relates to the possession or consumption of alcohol by a minor in a public place. Consistent with the above, we would recommend removing the defences provided for in subsection (a) and (b). Furthermore the penalty is insignificant and needs to be significantly increased. Non-monetary penalties should also be considered.

We would be delighted to discuss these recommendations with you should that be considered useful to your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

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