

**Supplementary
Submission
No 23a**

PROVISION OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS

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Bruce Notley-Smith MP

Chair
Social Policy Committee
NSW Legislative Assembly

Dear Mr Notley-Smith

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Social Policy Committee's discussion paper which evolved from last year's inquiry into the provision of alcohol to minors.

In replying, ADCA will resile from considering each recommendation contained in the discussion paper, preferring instead to offer general comments on the document's overall tenor. ADCA feels that the paper considers only one element of an issue that needs to be addressed at several levels.

Certainly, parents and guardians need to be aware of the ramifications of irresponsible supply of alcohol to minors in their care, but there are many instances of young people drinking at levels damaging to their health that occur without a parent's or guardian's knowledge. ADCA would observe that the ubiquitous nature of alcohol as part of Australian society does warrant some form of awareness campaign to promote its potential for harm.

We pointed out in our submission and in evidence that young people often source alcohol from friends or at large social events. As such, we believe any reform package that eventuates should embrace matters outside the parameters of secondary supply. This gives rise to far broader issues.

ADCA strongly supports diversionary programs and initiatives designed to sidestep some of the behaviour that contributes to the high cost to society of alcohol. Many studies here and overseas point to the desirability of addressing the problems flowing from alcohol abuse before it becomes a case of picking up the pieces after the damage is done. Modifying the behaviour of the drinking public has been shown to work; one has to look no further than the success of the program of earlier closing times, lockouts and drink restrictions in the Newcastle CBD in reducing alcohol-related violence. ADCA is surprised that the state government has not applied this initiative more broadly, particularly given the substantial evidence of its success and community interest.

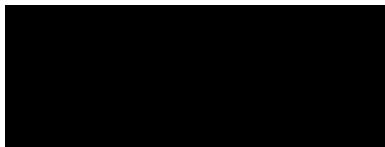
ADCA supports the intent of the questions relating to recommendations seven to ten. However, we would question the efficacy of providing information sessions to parents of pre-school age children as referred to in recommendation 11.

ADCA's submission to the inquiry raised a number of points that fall outside the responsibility of state jurisdictions – particularly the area of taxation, higher rates of which have been shown worldwide to rein in consumption. We made the point however that state governments, should they choose to do so, have the wherewithal to moderate alcohol marketing and promotional strategies, outlet densities and other ploys that place alcohol squarely before young, impressionable would-be drinkers.

Alcohol companies have seized on the use by young people of social media, and promote their products through third-party website, like festivals, encouraging those to attend them to post images and other content that indirectly – though powerfully – promotes alcohol brands. ADCA believes that such activity has burgeoned – even since making its submission to the inquiry – at a level that warrants action by licensing and planning authorities to assume greater control over the conduct of such events. The same controls should apply to sporting events, where many competitions are sponsored by the liquor industry – and where brands are synonymous with individual sporting codes.

At the 2003 NSW alcohol summit, the then state opposition – now the government – gave a strong commitment to tackling alcohol-related harm and the factors leading to it. I think you will agree that the need to broaden the scope of any legislative amendments is obvious. Much of it however comes down to the willingness of State and Territory Governments to grasp the nettle on the issues we raise.

Yours sincerely



David Templeman
CEO

12 July 2013