PROVISION OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS

Name: The Hon Delia Lawrie

Position: Minister for Alcohol Policy

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

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter dated 20 June 2012 inviting the Northern Territory to make a submission to the inquiry into the provision of alcohol to minors, currently being conducted by the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Social Policy.

On the 1 July 2011 the Territory Government launched the *Enough is Enough* Alcohol Reforms. The reforms provide a consistent Territory-wide response to target problem drinkers who cause alcohol-related crime and anti social behaviour. They are comprehensive and among the many measures, include new alcohol bans and treatment orders and the enforcement of these bans without criminalising chronic drinkers.

The reforms has achieved early successes. Since the commencement on 1 July 2011 and to the end of March 2012, more than 2300 problem drinkers have been banned, 54 per cent for repeat protective custody and 38 per cent for alcohol-related crimes including drink-driving, assaults and domestic violence. Over the same period, compared to the same nine months in the previous year, alcohol related assaults have dropped: 7 per cent in Darwin; 13 per cent in Palmerston; 8 per cent in Katherine; 5 per cent in Alice Springs; and 2.1 per cent Territory-wide. This data also reports non-domestic violence alcohol-related assaults dropped 9.5% Territory-wide.

While most reforms have been aimed at the consumption of alcohol by adults, a number of amendments have been made to the NT *Liquor Act* (the Act) to reduce the cases of children accessing and consuming alcohol.

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The measures introduced include:

- significant penalties for the use of false or fake identification by children who try to gain access to licensed premises or purchase alcohol;

- significant penalties for persons who have provided or prepared false/fake identification for use by children in accessing alcohol;

- making a blanket prohibition on the supply or consumption of alcohol to or by children on licensed premises; and

- significant penalties for the irresponsible supply of alcohol to children away from licensed premises.

These measures have been reinforced through the introduction of the requirement to provide approved identification when purchasing takeaway liquor. The reforms complemented existing legislation that placed stringent requirements on liquor licensees to adopt policies and strategies to reduce the chances of children accessing alcohol in their venue.

The NT Government however recognises that some parents may wish to introduce their children to alcohol in a responsible and controlled manner. Section 106C of the Act has been amended to acknowledge that there are some circumstances, such as weddings, birthdays etc, in which parents or guardians may wish to allow their child to consume alcohol.

The amendments set out the parameters in which it is acceptable for a child to be supplied with alcohol by a responsible adult. To assist further, the term 'responsible adult' is clearly defined.

To address those instances where it can be demonstrated that an adult has irresponsibly allowed a child to consume alcohol, or has irresponsibly supplied alcohol to a child, a fine of up to $13,700 applies, acknowledging the seriousness of the offence.

Since the introduction of the amendments, there have been no prosecutions under section 106C of the Act and the Licensing, Regulation and Alcohol Strategy division within the Department of Justice has not received any complaints, or had cause to investigate allegations of irresponsible alcohol supply to children outside licensed premises.

Yours sincerely

DELIA LAWRIE

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