

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES  
INQUIRY INTO STRATEGIES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG  
YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

**Supplementary questions: Commission for Children and Young People**  
*Answers are to be returned to the Committee secretariat by Wednesday 17 July 2013.*

1. Do you believe that public health education campaigns with regard to alcohol are effective with regard to young people?

Education and information provision about alcohol, including campaigns targeted at children and young people delivered as a *stand alone measure*, do not appear to be effective in achieving sustained behaviour change. This does not mean that public education campaigns should not be part of any chosen set of measures to address alcohol abuse among young people but that education should not be the sole measure. Public education campaigns must compete against alcohol marketing, to which young people are widely exposed and demonstrably impacted. (This is why the Australian Medical Association recommends statutory regulation of alcohol marketing to young people and phasing out of sports sponsorship by alcohol companies.)

2. In your submission (p 31) you discuss the need to give greater attention to the problems caused by drinking in private settings and by the supply of alcohol to minors. What you would recommend the Government needs to do to tackle these issues?

The Commission has made a submission to the Inquiry into the Provision of Alcohol to Minors, where we have set out our views on irresponsible supply by parents or other adults in detail. On this issue, the Commission's considers that no single measure is likely to be effective. While the Commission supports legislative measures to limit children's access to alcohol through secondary supply, we acknowledge that enforcement of provisions on what constitutes responsible supply and supervision by a parent or adult could be difficult. Any legislative change should be accompanied by an education campaign (see answer to question 1 above).

Overall, the Commission's view is that several measures are needed to tackle harmful drinking by children. These include review of industry self regulation (see answer to question 4 below) and taxation and pricing measures, together with restrictions on the physical availability of alcohol such as reducing outlet density.

When the Commission suggested that government responses should include a focus on alcohol related violence in private settings, we wanted to highlight that excessive consumption of alcohol at home by adults contributes to the modelling that young people receive. Statistically (according to an analysis of NSW recorded crime data) alcohol related violence is more prevalent in the home (residential locations) than either outside or inside licensed venues and should therefore receive attention in any efforts to address the negative

aspects of drinking culture. Alcohol is a significant factor in male homicides where the offender and victim know each other and in intimate partner homicides.

It is difficult, and on some views, both unwelcome and unnecessary, for government to regulate private behaviour. The Commission is simply suggesting that any measures, such as education or regulation, targeted at moderating drinking among young people also take account of parental influence.

3. What sort of educational messages do you believe public authorities should be sending to parents with regard to their children and alcohol consumption?

The Commission considers that educational messages should be factual and draw on authoritative sources such as the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the National Health and Medical Research Council. See Appendix 1 of our submission for details of messages that can be drawn from these sources about the impact of alcohol on brain development in young people, the relationship between alcohol use and poor mental health in adolescents and the impact of early onset drinking on dependency.

However, the overriding caveat on development of any educational message intended to impact children and young people, whether it is delivered via the media or indirectly through parents, is that it should be tested with children and young people themselves. The views of children and young people can very helpful in identifying barriers to receptiveness and suggesting ways to tailor messages so that young people will listen.

Overall, the evidence is clear that it is in the best interests of children and young people *not* to consume alcohol and that risky drinking is a health and social issue for a significant minority of children who drink to excess or start drinking at a young age. Parents need to know this and also that their own behaviour has an influence on children and young people.

4. The Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia suggest in their submission (Sub 47, p 5) that there has been a 'failure of industry-based regulatory mechanisms for alcohol advertising'. Would you agree with this view and can you explain your position?

The Commission's views, as set out in our submission, are primarily based on a review of literature and data. Drawing on the studies cited in our submission, the Commission's believes that the effectiveness of industry self-regulation should be reassessed. A review of international studies on the effectiveness of policies and programs to reduce the harm caused by alcohol (Anderson et al 2009) notes evidence from several studies that self regulation does not prevent alcohol marketing content reaching young people. This conclusion is echoed in the Alcohol and Public Policy Group 2010 review. Finally, our Young

People Advisory Group told us that alcohol advertising is shown during television programs that young people watch and that the advertisements are attractive and visually appealing.

## Inquiry into strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW

---

The Commission's Young People Advisory Group (YPAG) comprises 12 young people aged 13–16 years recruited from six schools around NSW. The YPAG advises the Commission on its work and on issues affecting children and young people in their communities.

The YPAG met on Saturday 27 July 2013 and discussed pre-loading, pre-gaming or pre-partying in response to questions raised by the Standing Committee on Social Issues as part of their inquiry into strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW.

The responses to the questions are outlined below.

### **1. Is there a culture of pre-loading among the young people you know, or in your local area?**

YPAG members said that they felt that young people did pre-load in their communities. Some members thought it was a significant issue in their community.

- *Yes, there is a culture of preloading among young people.*
- *There is a pretty big culture of pre-loading in our community.*
- *Yes, and it's getting younger and younger. And typically disadvantaged backgrounds.*
- *People don't do it all the time. They just do it when friend's come over. You only do it in a group of friends. It'd be weird to go out drunk by yourself.*

Others members thought that only a few young people pre-loaded.

- *Yes but it's a minority. It's more certain individuals doing it. Not big groups of people doing it. They often do it before underage parties because there's no alcohol there.*

Members said that a major reason for pre-loading was because alcohol would not be accessible at the event they are going to.

- *For us often they won't drink beforehand because they go to a friend's place and they can drink. But at Rodeo they won't be served, so they'll preload.*
- *If they are going to a party or an event where they're not allowed to drink, they'll drink beforehand. It usually happens when people are going to parties, they'll get drunk beforehand and after. E.g. at a friend's place.*
- *Yes, if young people are attending a party or if an event is in a restricted area or with adult supervision they will drink beforehand.*

## 2. What age groups are involved?

Members said that young people who pre-loaded would start between 14 to 16 years of age.

- 15-16+.
- *Mostly 14+. I have known a lot of people that start around year 9-10*
- *The age groups that are involved start from 14 and above. With it starting at an earlier age more often.*
- *Starting younger and younger. 14 year olds getting drunk because before they go to places where there's going to be adults.*

## 3. What is your understanding of the motivations/reasons for pre-loading among young people:

### (i) under 18?

YPAG members said that under 18 year olds preload because:

They can access alcohol at the preloading location and are unable to at certain events.

- *At the event they won't be served.*
- *Access to more free alcohol (parents).*
- *Because they are underage and there is no alcohol available at the party, they feel this is the only way.*
- *At events, you're not going to get served.*
- *Access to more free alcohol in the house.*
- *No alcohol at underage party.*

They can be drunk in an event without getting caught for drinking.

- *So they can still be intoxicated in a club area and also cannot be kicked out of a venue.*
- *So they don't get caught.*
- *They aren't able to (drink) under supervision or in restricted areas such as halls, restaurants etc.*
- *It's easy to access and barely get caught.*
- *At the event, there may be people you don't want them to see you drink. You don't want to be seen drinking – by preloading you can get drunk without anyone seeing you drink.*

Peer pressure and social reasons.

- *Pleasing peers or to fit in.*
- *For social standing.*

- *Younger kids drink because the year below sees the older grade drinking and then they drink.*
- *Social thing – If you have a gathering, it's just a few friends drinking before they go out. Getting ready to go out.*

Preloading is cheaper than drinking at a venue where you are required to purchase alcohol. Members said that some young people would ask others to buy alcohol for them at certain events e.g. festivals. Preloading avoids this task.

- *Don't have to ask anyone to buy it for them.*
- *(Drinking is) expensive at festivals so they preload.*
- *Don't have to ask anyone to buy them alcohol for them.*
- *If they pre-drink at home and they go out they only have to have one drink every so often.*
- *So they can still be intoxicated without paying as much while their out.*
- *Don't have to line up at the bar.*

They are in control of what they are drinking.

- *They can mix their own drinks.*

## **(ii) over 18?**

Members said that over 18 year olds preload because:

It's cheaper.

- *Cheaper and social.*
- *Cost – much cheaper to buy from a bottle shop rather than a bar.*
- *Cheaper than drinks at bars.*
- *You can get a six pack for the cost of a drink at a bar.*

They are not restricted by venue rules.

- *They cannot be kicked out of the venue or be limited on how much they drink.*

They prefer to, or for social reasons.

- *Preference.*
- *Don't have to line up as much when you are there.*
- *Social.*
- *More 'fun'.*
- *To get the night started earlier. So the event may start at 7 but they drink to kick it off.*

They are in control of what they are drinking.

- *Can mix drinks at home.*
- *less likely to get your drink spiked.*

#### **4. Are you aware of pre-loading being associated with particular events or places?**

Members identified:

Night clubs, events and festivals.

- *Clubs or large festival events, particularly events aimed at younger people.*
- *Music events.*
- *Annual cup and annual rodeo.*
- *Night clubs and festivals.*
- *Before concerts where there could be alcohol free zones. Not just young people but also over 18s.*
- *Concerts and events aimed at younger people.*
- *More common with festivals because it's not as easy (to get alcohol) there.*

Parties

- *Under 18 parties and people will often pre-load if going to an alcohol-free zone where can't drink, concerts.*
- *Mainly underage parties.*
- *Mainly parties.*
- *Before parties. Preloading before parties where alcohol is not available. If alcohol is available at the party then there's no point. It could be like just drinking. There's no line.*
- *It's mainly just parties where there's going to be supervision or alcohol is not available or they don't want people to see them drink.*
- *Parties supervised and unsupervised.*

Public spaces

- *Parks.*

#### **Other issues discussed**

One member mentioned that they did not feel like going to an event because they knew drunk young people would be there.

- *It's more the people who don't pre load who think about the risks (associated with being around young people who are drunk). Those who preload just see it as an opportunity to get drunk. It doesn't make me want to go to the event. You can't sit down and watch any of the events when people are screaming and stumbling around*

Where are they getting alcohol from?

- *Older siblings.*
- *Parents who don't care if their kids drink.*
- *Mixed parties – there are under 18 and over 18 year olds. It's hard to avoid (alcohol) when you're friends with older people.*

Where do you see over 18 year olds drink?

- *Mixed parties.*
- *The RSL.*

Where do people go after they've been rejected from a venue?

- *Another venue.*
- *A friend's place.*
- *An open house.*

What do you think about the American model where you cannot drink until you are 21 years old?

- *I personally think it would make it worse. The culture is already there.*
- *It's not stopping us at the moment, so it's not going to change.*
- *There is an incentive to not drink if it's 18 and you only have to wait a couple of years before you can drink. If it's 21 people will drink because they're not going to wait 5 years.*

What about the European model where you can drink certain drinks with a lower percentage of alcohol when you're younger.

- *My friend is from Germany. They drink at dinner. My friend said it's more respected over there.*
- *In Europe binge drinking is less common, because it's just part of their culture and who they are.*
- *It's like slowly introduced. It's introduced over dinner and stuff. Here – it's like you just turned 18 and you're going to party at a club.*

No members had used the term “pre-loading” before. Some had not heard that term before the session. Many members did not necessarily differentiate between pre-drinking and drinking at the “main event”.

- *Pre-drinks.*
- *Pre's and after's.*
- *We don't really call it anything. It just happens.*
- *It's not really a concept.*



How worried are you about pre-loading as an issue? Members voted:

Not a concern	Bit of a concern	Big concern
0	10	1

- *In a way it's safer because they are drinking at home and it's in a safe environment and your drink won't get spiked*

How serious is drink spiking? (Five members knew of it happening to someone)

Not a concern	Bit of a concern	Big concern
9	2	0