



POLICE ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Mr Stewart Smith
Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

10 May 2013

Dear Mr Smith,

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

I refer to your correspondence of 3rd May last regarding evidence given by Messrs Weber, Remfrey and Chilvers of this Association before the Committee on 29 April 2013.

We have reviewed the transcript of that evidence and do not wish to make any amendments.

There were two questions in the transcript that were taken on notice and I will answer them in the order in which they appear in the transcript. There were also two supplementary questions sent with your correspondence and I will also attempt to answer them as well.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE:

At page 27 of the transcript:

***The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** We had a disgusting Australia Day riot at Lennox Head a few years ago and everyone could see it coming. It appears to me that the powers were insufficient. Secondly, if there were to be some sort of a crackdown on the pre-fuelling in public parks, which I understand is a problem in various specific communities, would police have the powers necessary to do that? Can you make any suggestions as to how we can improve those powers, even on notice if you want to?*

A major issue for alcohol abuse among young people is the prevalence of parties held in private residences where alcohol is provided for underage consumption. Unfortunately, the owners of premises are not held accountable at law for the provision of alcohol in these circumstances. A change to the law to make it an offense to host a party where alcohol is provided to or consumed by underage drinkers would at least put owners of premises on notice. This would be difficult to police without the power to enter private premises, but would nevertheless send a strong message to adults who allow such parties to take place.

It remains difficult to prosecute liquor retailers who sell alcohol to underage drinkers. A practical way to address this would be to give police the power to undertake controlled purchases of alcohol – that is, to send sixteen and seventeen year olds into licensed premises to see if they are able to purchase alcohol. This kind of sting operation is used successfully to prosecute people who sell tobacco products to underage users.

The offence of drinking in public places needs to be strengthened. The current penalty is a \$20 fine – largely unenforceable and of little deterrent value. Alcohol can be confiscated and tipped out, but has little impact when offenders can simply purchase more and ignore the fine.

At page 30 of the transcript:

Mr REMFREY: There actually has been a study done on that very issue and the affordability of alcohol increased by 40 per cent between 1995 and 2008.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Can we have that study because that is important.

Mr REMFREY: Yes, we will get that to you.

The study referred to is:

Carragher, N and Chalmers, J (2011). *What are the options? Pricing and taxation policy reforms to redress excessive alcohol consumption and related harms in Australia*. Published by NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

I have attached a copy of the paper to this email.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

1. Can you provide any advice on social media complaints or impacts?

I am not sure what this question is seeking and will presume that it refers to the practice of the use of social media to advertise parties that result in large numbers of young people arriving at

sites that are ill-prepared for the numbers. Many of these young people are already affected by alcohol.

It is obvious that these situations can cause significant problems for party organizers, local residents and the police. The NSW Police Force provides support and information for organizing safe parties on the following website: www.mynite.com.au young people are urged to register their party with the police and given tips on how to avoid problems, especially with the appropriate use of social media. Unfortunately many are not aware of this site and are often unable (or unwilling) to control the use of their social media.

Social media is almost impossible to control. It is also resource intensive to monitor. With extra resources – both personnel and technology, police would be able to be better prepared for the negative impacts of social media. A well resource intelligence unit could be added to the Youth Command to achieve this.

The problem of unwanted and pre-loaded gatecrashers arriving at parties can be alleviated by the measures suggested by us in our evidence – stronger controls on the access to alcohol and minimum pricing policies.

2. How many youth liaison officers operate across the state? Where are they located?

I have attached a number of documents to this email addressing this question, including:

1. The Youth Command organizational chart
2. The Youth Command Business Continuity Plan
3. A list of the Command locations and contacts
4. Maps of the School Liaison regions.

I trust this answers the additional questions from the Committee. If you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Greg Chilvers
Director
Research and Resource Centre