

**INQUIRY INTO STRATEGIES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL
ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

Organisation: Liquor Stores Association NSW

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**Submission to
Standing Committee on Social Issues
In response to
Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Alcohol Abuse
Among Young People**

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LSA NSW Submission

Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Alcohol Abuse Among Young People

LSA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into *Strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW*.

Terms of Reference

LSA NSW's understanding of the terms of reference for the inquiry is as follows:

"That the Standing Committee on Social Issues inquire into and report on strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW, and in particular:

- a) the effect of alcohol advertisements and promotions on young people, including consideration of the need to further restrict alcohol advertising and promotion*
- b) the effectiveness of alcohol harm minimisation strategies targeted at young people*
- c) measures to minimise the impact of alcohol in the workplace*
- d) the effectiveness of measures to reduce drink driving*
- e) measures to reduce alcohol related violence, including in and around licensed venues*
- f) measures to address the impact of alcohol abuse on the health system*
- g) any other related matter".*

About the LSA NSW

The Liquor Stores Association of New South Wales (LSA NSW) has been the consistent voice of the NSW Retail Liquor Industry since 1961, and is a united industry body representing all NSW packaged liquor retailers whether it be the independent liquor store, licenced general store, supermarket or corporate chain store.

Our primary purpose is to *'create and promote a responsible, sustainable and diverse off-premise liquor sector in NSW, by effective and relevant engagement of all stakeholders'*

LSA NSW represents around 75 – 80% of the market of take-away packaged liquor licences in NSW. The membership includes some of the most recognised and trusted brands in liquor retailing in Australia. These range from small independent family owned local convenience outlets, independently owned and run outlets operating under banners such as Cellarbrations, Little Bottler, Local Liquor, Porter's Liquor and many more, through to Woolworths packaged liquor outlets including Dan Murphy's, BWS Liquor and Woolworth's Liquor and Coles Packaged Liquor outlets including First Choice, Vintage Cellars & Liquorland stores and more recently also ALDI Licensed Supermarkets.

NSW Packaged Liquor stores directly employ approximately 14,000 staff across NSW, including many trainees and apprentices.

LSA NSW believes that alcohol consumption is ultimately an issue of individual responsibility and individual behaviour. However, LSA NSW also fully accepts that it has a key responsibility to work with the Government and the community to minimise harm to individuals and local communities.

It is for this reason that LSA NSW continues to promote standards of operation for its members beyond the required standards of legal compliance.

LSA NSW and the Retail Packaged Liquor sector take their responsible service of alcohol responsibilities seriously which is why we developed and continue to promote **ID-25** and **Don't Buy It For Them** to discourage underage attempts at purchase and to educate parents and adults about their responsibility to not purchase alcohol on behalf of minors.

The issue of refusing service, particularly to parents, when our members believe secondary supply may take place is one of the biggest challenges liquor retailers and their employees face. Refusal often results in the employee being subjected to aggressive and threatening behaviour.

Several of these initiatives, initially trialled and introduced by our larger members such as Woolworths, have subsequently been developed and promoted to all other industry members, including:

ID-25 – a program to educate customers, dissuade attempted purchase by minors and to reinforce staff awareness and confidence to refuse service to minors with point-of-sale material. Under this program, if a customer looks under the age of 25, staff members are encouraged to ask to see proof of age ID prior to selling alcohol to that customer, under an inoffensive promotional line “if you look under 25 take it as a compliment as we will ask for ID”.

Don't Buy It For Them – a program to discourage secondary supply and to educate the community on their shared responsibility not to supply to under age and highlights the penalties for doing so. It also reinforces staff awareness and confidence to refuse service when in doubt, with back-up point-of-sale material.

In addition to these initiatives LSA NSW also worked with our National Association the Australian Liquor Stores Association (ALSA) to develop and launch the ALSA Product Ranging Guidelines.

ALSA Product Ranging Guidelines – incorporate a checklist guide to assist individual operators to make sensible product ranging decisions on products that may potentially be packaged and marketed irresponsibly.

LSA NSW and its members have a long history of working with Government and regulators to disseminate alcohol educational materials through their liquor outlets, directly to consumers such as:

- Point-of-sale information campaigns on responsible drinking including standard drinks educational campaigns on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing;
- Point-of-sale information leaflets to direct consumers to 'Get The Facts' on behalf of DrinkWise Australia;

LSA NSW as a member of ALSA was represented as a founding Board member of DrinkWise a not-for-profit, independent research and social change agency funded by the Australian alcohol beverage industry. Through research, community based programs and social marketing campaigns it is dedicated to building a safer drinking culture in Australia. The Board of DrinkWise encompasses both industry and community members.

In addition, LSA NSW supports ALSA's national retail training body – the Retail Liquor Development Foundation (RLDF), to provide cost effective training to encourage responsible and professional retailing by its members.

Retail Liquor Development Foundation – was established in 2004 to support the training and education needs of the liquor industry. RLDF originally a joint venture with the Foster's Group, is now wholly owned by ALSA and is available to liquor retailers and their staff nationally.

LSA NSW is also currently working with other industry groups to pioneer additional professional development, training and accreditation standards for licensees and their staff.

LSA NSW has a demonstrated commitment to responsible supply and promotion of alcohol beverage products.

Outcomes & Track Record

NSW Liquor Licence enforcement by both NSW Police and by the Office of Liquor Gaming & Racing Inspectors over recent years has shown that the above measures and ongoing reinforcement by LSA NSW of the need for our members to be vigilant and to abide by the regulatory environment has consistently resulted in near zero breaches on those issues by NSW Packaged Liquor Licensees.

Executive Summary

The majority of Australian adults (82.4% of Australians aged over 18 years¹) consume alcohol responsibly and it is important that the inquiry is able to distinguish between the moderate consumption of alcohol, which is a normal enjoyable aspect of life for the vast majority of adults, with the misuse of alcohol by a small minority. NSW crime statistics² for 2011 demonstrate that alcohol related crime has decreased compared to previous reporting periods (assault of police (-3.7%), non-domestic related violence (-5.3%) and domestic violence (-2.6%) and offensive behaviour (stable).

LSA is committed to working with the NSW Government and other stakeholders to better understand, develop and implement targeted strategies to address the misuse of alcohol. We believe that an evidence-based approach to policy making will lead to the implementation of measures that can have a real effect on harm minimisation without negatively impacting the majority of those who are able to enjoy alcohol responsibly.

Key Considerations

LSA NSW provides the following key points, for the inquiry to take into consideration and when considering future potential policy development.

The Retail Liquor Industry and our membership are diverse and include small, medium and large independent outlets, as well as the three chain store operators Woolworths Liquor Group, Coles Liquor Group and ALDI Licensed Supermarkets.

Alcohol Consumption in Australia:

It must be recognised that responsible consumption of alcohol by adults is a lawful, socially acceptable, recreational activity which provides considerable social benefit to large numbers of people and also provides significant economic benefit to the community.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) media release dated May 3rd, 2012 confirms that despite a growing population there has been a drop in the overall volume of pure alcohol sold, and this is now the fourth year in a row that overall apparent per capita consumption has declined – now 5.4% down compared to 2009.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Australian Health Survey 2011-2012* released 29.10.2012

² NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research *Alcohol related crime for NSW ratios and trends 2011*

In fact the apparent consumption of pure alcohol per capita³, has fluctuated over the past 50 years. From the early 1960s onwards apparent per capita consumption increased steadily, peaking at 13.1 litres of pure alcohol per person in 1974-75.

However, apparent consumption of alcohol has declined to 10.0 litres of pure alcohol per capita in 2010-11, down approximately 24% on the peaks of the mid 1970's.

Recent data re alcohol consumption by young people:

The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW)⁴ has regularly looked at and reported on trends in underage consumption of alcohol and abstinence.

- The majority of 18-29 year olds do not engage in risky drinking (68.3% for 18-19 year olds and 73.1% for those aged 20-29 years)⁵.
- Between 1993 and 2010, the proportion of people in Australia aged 14 or older who drank daily remained relatively stable at about 7–8%.
- There was also little change in the proportions of people drinking alcohol at levels that put them at risk of harm over their lifetime, or from a single drinking occasion at least once a month.
- The proportion of people abstaining rose from 17% in 2007 to 19% in 2010 (a statistically significant difference);
- The largest increase in abstainers was seen among those aged 12–17⁶.
- A higher proportion of 12–17-year-olds abstained from alcohol (61.6%) than had consumed it in the last 12 months (38.4%). The proportion of 12–15-year-olds and 16–17-year-olds abstaining from alcohol increased in 2010 (from 69.9% in 2007 to 77.2% and from 24.4% to 31.6%, respectively).
- The total volume of alcohol consumed by young Australians aged 18-24 years in an average seven days also decreased down 11% in five years⁷.

³ ABS *Apparent consumption of Alcohol in Australia 2010-2011* 4307.0.55.001 released 3.5.2012

⁴ AIHW 2010 National Drug Household Survey November 2011.

⁵ NDSHS 2010, p 46

⁶ AIHW 2010 National Drug Household Survey November 2011

⁷ *ibid.*

- The proportion of young Australians aged 18-24 years that drink alcohol in an average four week period has progressively decreased each year for the last five years. In the 12 months to June 2012, 72.5% of this age group drank alcohol which is a decrease from 74.7% from the previous year⁸.

Whilst the steady continued increase in abstinence from minors is encouraging, there are real and legitimate concerns about the consumption habits of certain risk groups, being young people and especially younger women. 20% of Australians aged 14 years or over consumed alcohol at levels that put them at risk of harm⁹.

Young people's drinking is influenced by a complex number of factors including family, friends, and drinking occasions. We believe that a complex range of solutions is required to reduce the potential risk for harm.

Evidence from Government surveys consistently says that the vast majority of underage drinkers obtain any alcohol through parents, friends or older siblings of legal purchasing age, with only 0.4% of 12 – 17 year olds obtaining their first alcohol beverage by purchasing (e.g. from a licensed outlet)¹⁰.

Therefore any evidence-based approach must include a focus on one of the main contributors to the problem area being the secondary supply of alcohol to minors.

Drinking status/ first supply	12-17	18-19	20-29	30-39	40+	Total (12+)	14-19	14+	18+
Friend or acquaintance	49.5	48.3	49.2	50.0	44.0	46.5	50.1	46.6	46.4
Relative	14.1	9.0	9.1	9.0	10.1	9.8	10.9	9.7	9.6
Parent	30.7	31.4	29.2	21.8	24.0	25.2	30.9	25.2	24.9
Stole it	*2.9	*2.4	3.0	5.1	2.3	3.0	2.4	3.0	3.0
Bought it	**0.4	6.3	7.6	11.6	16.8	12.9	3.2	12.9	13.5
Other	*2.4	*2.6	1.9	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6

Table 1: Supply of first glass of alcohol, recent drinkers and ex-drinkers aged 12 years or older, by age, 2010 (per cent)¹¹

⁸ 'Younger Australians are now drinking less', Roy Morgan Research, 27 September, 2012

⁹ NDSHS 2010, p46

¹⁰ AIHW 2010 National Drug Household Survey 2011

¹¹ AIHW 2010 National Drug Household Survey November 2011, Table 4.26 Supply of first glass of alcohol, recent drinkers and ex-drinkers aged 12 years or older, by age, 2010 (per cent)

First source of supply:

The most likely source of recent and ex-drinkers' first serve of alcohol was from a friend or acquaintance (Table 1).

In addition:

- One-quarter (25.2%) of recent and ex-drinkers were supplied with their first glass of alcohol by their parents, and
- People aged 40 years or older (16.8%) were more likely than younger age groups to have bought their first serve of alcohol themselves¹².

The Behaviour of People:

By far the majority of people who consume alcohol do so responsibly. Outlets for the sale of alcohol therefore have the potential for significant positive social impact in the way that they serve this legitimate community demand.

LSA NSW does however accept that some groups do misuse alcohol and we support targeted, evidence-based interventions aimed at those clearly identified groups, without penalising the remainder who are the vast majority of responsible and law abiding moderate drinkers.

Individual Responsibility:

LSA NSW believes that alcohol consumption is ultimately an issue of individual responsibility. However, LSA NSW also fully accepts that it has a key responsibility to work with the Government and the community to minimise harm to individuals and local communities.

LSA NSW believes that measures to address individual responsibility in the context of alcohol consumption generally fall broadly under the two (2) following areas:

- *Require* individuals through regulation, sanctions and policing of existing legislation to take personal responsibility for their behaviour when consuming alcohol or supplying liquor to others, and also while on or in the vicinity of licensed premises and in public places; and
- *Promote and encourage* individuals and communities to take responsibility for alcohol consumption and behave in socially appropriate ways. This is achieved through education, harm minimisation and treatment initiatives aimed at intervening early to

¹² Note: Age group (years) Base is recent and ex-drinkers.

• Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

avoid problematic drinking and any associated violence as well as to prevent the recurrence of these behaviours;

It is proposed that the focus of individual and social responsibility be on the '*promote and encourage*' areas above, in line with the following objectives:

- To consider and develop strategies that increase individuals' awareness of their obligations under the law and legal, social and other ramifications of non-compliance;
- To reduce anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related violence by developing strategies that educate and encourage individuals to be accountable for their behaviour and actions;

Changing the Australian Drinking Culture:

Effective approaches include educational measures to change the Australian drinking culture.

The change in community attitudes toward drink-driving is one of the most successful examples of a positive change in drinking culture. As a key stakeholder, LSA NSW was heavily involved in the development of this campaign, which was brought about not by restricting the availability of alcohol, but rather by a holistic combination of education, effective social marketing campaigns, and rigorous enforcement in the form of random breath testing.

Anyone working in this field over many years recognises that numerous factors, primarily people's behaviour and drinking patterns are the key to better outcomes – not simplistic band-aid solutions.

Measures to minimise alcohol in the workplace:

LSA NSW supports the view that all employers develop a workplace culture through the provision of information and education, so all workers are aware of the issues associated with harmful alcohol use and how it may impact on their health and safety. An integral part of the development of that culture is the implementation of a policy of 'Responsible Alcohol' in the workplace and in the community.

LSA NSW believes that any workplace Responsible Alcohol policy should be well publicised within that workplace, and provide for a suitable information and education program for all staff. The aims of the policy and procedures should be prevention, education, counselling and rehabilitation, and we believe that it should be a part of an organisation's overall Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) strategy.

The effectiveness of measures to reduce drink driving:

The safety of young drivers is an issue of great concern to us all. Gaining a driver's licence is one of the key markers in the transition to adulthood, particularly for young males. It provides a level of independence and freedom of movement signifying a greater level of autonomy, but also carries with it grave responsibility for the safety of themselves, their passengers, other road users and members of the general community.

Young drivers continue to be overrepresented in crash statistics. According to data compiled by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) young, primarily male drivers are involved in almost 30%¹³ of fatal crashes and 29%¹⁴ of all motor vehicle crashes. This is despite the fact that they constitute only 16%¹⁵ of all licence holders. The trauma that results not only affects young drivers themselves, but also their passengers, families and other road users, as well as the Police, Ambulance and rescue workers who attend the accident.

However, since the introduction of the Random Breath Test (RBT) in 1982 the number of fatal crashes involving alcohol has significantly dropped from 40% of all fatalities to the current level of 19%¹⁶. Cultural attitudes to drink driving have changed due to an increased awareness of the death tolls attributed to drink driving, the increased risk of being 'caught' by the Police and the potential penalties for these offences. This suggests regulation, enforcement and community education have combined to have a significant impact on drink driving.

Alcohol advertisements and promotions on young people:

The major influences on underage drinking are peers and parental drinking behaviour¹⁷. Advertising is not a significant factor in influencing underage drinking and there is a lack of evidence to support a relationship between advertising and either levels of drinking or patterns of drinking¹⁸.

The current regulatory system only permits the promotion of responsible alcohol consumption. LSA NSW contends that there is no rationale to support further restrictions and / or controls on alcohol advertising or promotions in NSW.

¹³ Transport for NSW, Road Traffic Crashes in NSW 2011, Table 3, Deaths in NSW, p 19

¹⁴ *ibid.* Table 16d, p. 86.

¹⁵ *ibid.* Table 33, p. 86.

¹⁶ <http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/alcoholdrugs/drinkdriving/index.html>

¹⁷ Donovan, J.E (2004) Adolescent alcohol initiation: a review of psychological risk factors. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 35(6):529. E7-18.

¹⁸ Industry View on Beverage Alcohol Advertising and Marketing, with Special Reference to Young People, prepared for WHO by International Center

In addition, Australia has a quasi-regulatory system for alcohol advertising in place with guidelines for advertising that have been negotiated with government, and consumer complaints are handled independently, but all costs are borne by industry. The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme is the centrepiece of this system and is administered by a Management Committee which includes industry, advertising and government representatives¹⁹.

The Code is designed to ensure that alcohol advertising will be conducted in a manner which neither conflicts with nor detracts from the need for responsibility and does not encourage consumption by underage persons.

The effectiveness of alcohol harm minimisation:

The aim of the National Drug Strategy²⁰ is to build safe and healthy communities by minimising alcohol, tobacco and other drug related health, social and economic harms among individuals, families and communities. The third pillar of the strategy is harm reduction and recommends that initiatives are developed to reduce the secondary supply of alcohol to minors including through community education and information campaigns advising parents of health and social harms from alcohol and potential criminal justice outcomes.

A number of community education and information campaigns have been developed in response to the strategy including The "Kids Absorb Your Drinking"²¹ ad campaign which demonstrates how parent's attitudes and actions around alcohol, especially in a social setting such as the "Great Aussie backyard BBQ" can strongly influence their children- and potentially influence the decisions they make towards alcohol in the future.

This campaign was developed by DrinkWise to promote change towards a healthier and safer drinking culture in Australia by affecting generational change in the way all Australians consume alcohol. Evidence suggests that awareness-raising strategies which '*seek to start a conversation about this important issue, whether it be among spouses, within the family and/or friends, well before their own children start experimenting with alcohol themselves*' are likely to be of benefit in reducing risks from alcohol related harm for all members of the community²².

¹⁹ Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) <http://www.abac.org.au/about/>

²⁰ National Drug Strategy 2010-2015 *A framework for Action on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs* P 18

²¹ DrinkWise www.drinkwise.org.au

²² Ibid. 2009

In addition to the DrinkWise programs, a number of other government initiatives²³ have been developed specifically for young people, particularly focussing on 16 – 18 year olds in the last two years of secondary school.

Summary

LSA takes the view that further regulatory restrictions should only be imposed where there is a risk to public health and safety or to correct market failure; and that mandatory regulation should only be imposed where self-regulation has proven to have failed.

As a key stakeholder in the liquor industry in NSW, LSA NSW appreciates the opportunity to submit to the inquiry. LSA NSW is genuinely interested in continuing to work with all stakeholders to develop and apply evidence-based approaches to minimise the opportunity for minors to access alcohol beverages and assist in communicating responsibility to parents and other adults who may be tempted to supply alcohol to minors.

This is in addition to reinforcing with our members the legal requirements for packaged liquor licensees and their staff to ensure they do not serve minors and to be on the lookout for attempts at secondary supply.

Reiterating, the issue of refusing service, particularly to parents, when our members believe secondary supply may take place is one of the biggest challenges liquor retailers and their employees face. Refusal often results in the employee being subjected to aggressive and threatening behaviour.

LSA NSW believes that alcohol consumption is ultimately an issue of individual responsibility, however we do accept that we have a responsibility to work with all stakeholders to minimise harm to individuals and local communities.

Responsible consumption of alcohol is a lawful, socially acceptable, recreational activity which provides considerable social benefit to large numbers of people and provides significant economic benefit to the community.

Recent ABS data confirms that despite a growing population, the overall apparent per capita consumption of pure alcohol has dropped for the fourth year in a row, and the total volume of pure alcohol sold has also declined.

²³ 'Drugs, Alcohol and Celebrating Safely' @www.turning18.com.au and 'Take the hint. Call it a night, without the fight' launched November 2010 NSW Police via You Tube.

The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare reports have also showed a significant increase in the number of 12 – 17 year olds who were abstaining from alcohol.

Research has also confirmed that the rate of underage drinking has remained relatively stable over recent years and more young people are abstaining from alcohol than they were – however those who do consume alcohol reportedly obtain it from parents or other adults so more work is needed to get that message through to the target community.

When it comes to changing people's behaviour, there is no simple answer, and LSA NSW believes combined effort by government, the industry and the media on educational measures to change the drinking culture will continue to grow in importance and effectiveness.

LSA NSW recommends that education campaigns are aimed at parents and other adults to demonstrate positive and responsible role models and to make them aware of both the potential risks to minors and the potential penalties that may apply to those adults who consider purchasing on behalf of or supplying alcohol to minors.