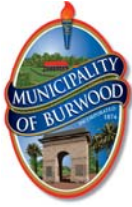


**INQUIRY INTO STRATEGIES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL  
ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Burwood Council

**Date received:** 27/02/2013

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***Burwood Council***  
heritage ▪ progress ▪ pride

## **Submission by Burwood Council**

### **Social Issues Committee**

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

**February 2013**

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## Introduction

Burwood Council welcomes the opportunity to have input into this Inquiry on 'strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW' and supports initiatives which actively work to reduce alcohol abuse in youth populations.

The Burwood Local Government Area has a population of 34,305 within 715 hectares (7 km<sup>2</sup>), resulting in a population density of 42.78 persons per hectare. Burwood has a high density CBD area with over 30 liquor licenses operating within the Burwood/Canada Bay Liquor Accord.

Burwood has been identified in the NSW Metropolitan Strategy as a 'major centre' with shopping and business facilities catering for surrounding areas, government and community services and a major transport interchange. There are approximately 5,000 students in Burwood per day, with a number of community facilities in high volume traffic and pedestrian movement areas. With over 20,000 commuters per day in the CBD, creating high volumes of pedestrian and vehicle activity, there are numerous challenges in effectively and safely managing commuter and vehicular movements.

Burwood has a relatively small geographic area and drink driving related crashes account for 3% of incidents within the Burwood CBD area. This is equal to the percentage of alcohol related crashes in the Sydney Region. Crashes occur mainly on the weekend between 9.00pm and midnight.

According to the NSW Department of Transport, Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) drink driving is a factor in approximately one in every five fatal crashes in NSW, with one third of all drink drivers in fatal crashes aged between 17-24 years. This makes drink driving a serious issue, particularly for young people.

With recent RMS advertisement campaigns, including Plan B, The Brain Campaign and The Paranoia Campaign, significant government funding is being used to show the effects of drink driving, with considerable marketing focused on young drivers. It is important therefore to consider whether this investment is likely to make a difference on levels of drink driving amongst young people.

Burwood Council has an active youth advisory group called the Burwood Youth Advisory Group (BYAG) representing young people who either live, work or play in the Burwood Local Government Area. In preparing this submission Burwood Council consulted with the Burwood Youth Advisory Group (12 members between 16 – 24yrs), with the aim of understanding youth perceptions on these advertising campaigns and related matters.

## Burwood2030 Community Strategic Plan

Burwood2030 sets out the community's vision for the Burwood Local Government Area which acknowledges the importance of our heritage and lifestyle, whilst striving to be a place that continues to be progressive, innovative and sustainable and a safe place to live and work.

The following strategic goals in Burwood2030 relate to road and pedestrian safety issues, with priority given to improving commuter movement by:

- Investigating an increase in bus priority lanes along local roads
- Identifying opportunities to improve vehicular access to Burwood from main road corridors
- Working with key partners to reduce crime and improve community safety
- Ensuring footpath designs aim to increase pedestrian only spaces

Each of these strategic goals was developed in consultation with the community and highlights the importance of an integrated safety approach, focusing on the built environment to reduce road related incidences. In order to effectively reduce the accident impacts of drink driving, a similar approach is required, thereby, built environments around roads are made safer and drivers are educated on risks associated with alcohol and driving.

## **Submission addressing the Terms of Reference**

Burwood Council has reviewed the Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry Terms of Reference. The following points are Council's comments in response to item 'd'.

### ***The effectiveness of measures to reduce drink driving***

The underlying campaign factors presented in the aforementioned RMS drink driving campaigns have all featured integrated statewide marketing. Media channels used included digital, cinema and free-to-air television, through the production of specific clips featuring scenarios based on campaign aims.

BYAG was consulted via informal phone interviews requesting comment on their knowledge levels of the RMS campaigns, understanding of the aims of the campaigns and whether the campaigns would influence their choices.

BYAG members were only able to provide detailed comments on the current Plan B Campaign, with members not being able to articulate the meaning of The Brain Campaign. The Paranoia Campaign was identified by 33% of BYAG members consulted, with mixed responses on the meaning of the campaign.

### **The Brain Campaign**

There was no formal evaluation information on The Brain Campaign on the RMS website, with campaign details focusing on the visual effects used in the production of the advertisement. With limited access to publically available evaluation this raises questions on the social conditioning and behavioural impacts as a comparison to cost/benefit of television clips.

No BYAG members were able to provide comment on the Brain Campaign. It is important to note this campaign was targeted towards country regions, which may account for BYAG members not remembering or seeing it.

### **The Paranoia Campaign**

BYAG members were asked whether they could explain the messages in the advertisement. Of the 33% who could identify the advert, 16% were able to clearly articulate "don't drink and drive – you will get caught". BYAG members did not identify the methods of detection, such as random breath testing or police cars as mobile units. BYAG responses indicated a vague awareness of getting caught with one response highlighting drivers being responsible.

BYAG members were asked whether they would change their behaviour based on watching the adverts and what this behavioural change would look like. BYAG members were not able to identify behavioural changes based on the adverts, with responses limited to repeating the "don't drink and drive – you will get caught" message. Hearing campaign slogans and not being able to relate the messages to an action, raises questions on the actual levels of understanding and ability to apply to 'real world' situations.

There was limited evaluation information on The Paranoia Campaign on the RMS website, with statements focusing on the connection between emotions portrayed in the advertisements and the audience. The evaluation comments do not indicate whether the risk of being caught drink driving directly prevented people from drink driving. Based on only 33% of BYAG responses remembering the Campaign, this feedback questions the longevity and information retention presented through 30 – 90 second clips.

## **The Plan B Campaign**

Of the BYAG responses received, 83% of BYAG members were able to identify they had either seen the TV advertisement clip or a poster (one response stated they had seen a poster).

When BYAG members were asked to explain the messages in the campaign, 100% of responses were able to articulate messages of 'planning ahead' and 'alternative transport options'.

When BYAG members were asked whether they would change their behaviour based on the messages within the campaign, mixed responses were received. Over half (54%) clearly stated the campaign made them think about driving to a night out or thinking about using public transport. Other responses included:

- "I don't think this ad is enough to compel someone to change their behaviour"
- "No – because I don't act irresponsible"
- "I don't drink and drive"
- "Inadequate substitutes for driving"

A common theme in the responses from BYAG members, who stated the Campaign makes them think about drink driving, is the word 'think'. Of the 54% who stated they would change their behaviour, 66% stated they would 'think' about a plan, not stating they would actually use public transport or other alternative transport. Furthermore, 18% of responses clearly indicated the campaign needed more of a 'shock value' to reach young people, with ideas focusing on what could happen if you don't plan ahead (e.g. "death, losing friends/family").

When BYAG members were asked what age group the campaign is targeted towards, responses were able to be identified in the following categories:

- Under 25 years (50% of responses)
- 17 – 33 years (33% of responses)
- 25 – 30 years (16% of responses)

Based on the information on the RMS website, even though Plan B is stated to reach all drivers, the target age group is 17 – 39 years. BYAG responses identified this age group as the target of the campaign.

As this campaign is currently running, there is no evaluation information on the RMS website, including how its effectiveness is to be measured.

## ***Other related matters***

### **Alternative Transport**

Plan B encourages the use of alternative transport, with an emphasis on public transport. BYAG members were asked whether transport options are easy to use and affordable. Of the responses

received, 80% indicated that public transport was easy to use and somewhat affordable depending on the area. Taxi services were clearly indicated as not being an option due to cost. Even though public transport was identified as easy to use, there were some common areas of concern among BYAG members in using public transport:

- The availability of public transport at night was noted as a serious issue with night time services ending at a variety of times making it difficult to get home
- Where night time services do exist (e.g. Night Rider Buses), responses indicated these services had very limited drop-off areas
- Safety concerns were highlighted as a serious issue, with 60% of responses stating feelings of being unsafe, with the safety of young females being identified as a particular area of concern

BYAG members live in urban Sydney areas where public transport is more readily available and yet there are a number of concerns with accessibility and safety. This raises further questions for young people in rural areas and the accessibility of public transport.

In 2003, Youthsafe released the *Research Report: Research to Underpin the Development of Strategies for Safer Celebrating and Road Safety* which focused on youth attitudes to celebrations and road safety. The findings from the report further underpin the concerns raised by BYAG on availability and safety at night when using public transport.

## Drink driving

The RMS campaigns detailed in this submission all focus on raising awareness of drink driving and reducing road accidents where drink driving is a factor. Based on this focus, BYAG members were asked to indicate what a standard drink is for a male or female and indicate an appropriate blood alcohol level to drive based on whether the person is a male or female and on a full licence. Based on the wide variety of responses given, BYAG members were not able to identify what a standard drink is (type of drink and amount consumed). BYAG members were also not able to identify the right blood alcohol limit with all responses over 0.05 BAC.

These responses have highlighted a significant gap in knowledge of blood alcohol limits. From a harm minimisation perspective, young people being correctly informed about the consumption of alcohol is important in encouraging informed choices when celebrating.

## Conclusions

The key conclusions from this submission are as follows:

- Young people are aware of RMS campaigns and mass marketing techniques, such as television clips to reach target audiences
- Drink driving is an issue in Burwood given that the geographic area of the Burwood Local Government Area is relatively small compared to other council areas
- Drink driving related crashes have increased from 2010 – 2011 even though over 55,269 RBTs were completed in the Burwood Local Area Command over this time period
- It is questionable whether young people are able to retain the information contained in the campaigns after they have stopped, with little available data on the longevity of the RMS campaign messages
- There was limited understanding of blood alcohol levels and standard drinks shown by BYAG participants, highlighting a need for campaigns to include this information in an accessible and youth-friendly format

- Public transport was identified as being easy to use, however accessibility and safety were identified as inhibiting factors to usage, particularly at night

## Recommendations

As a result the following recommendations with regard to ‘strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW’ are made for consideration by the Standing Committee on Social Issues:

- That the RMS provide opportunities for the development of advertisement campaigns in consultation with youth organisations and committees, providing youth leadership roles in the development of campaign resources
- That the RMS work with educational institutions to develop alcohol awareness campaigns which have an underlying harm minimisation approach in educating young people about alcohol limits and content in drinks
- That the RMS work with Railcorp and State Transit Authority to conduct a state-wide needs analysis of public transport services and accessibility for 9pm – 6am on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights in consultation with youth services
- That the RMS work with Railcorp and State Transit Authority to fund extended hours for public transport services between 12am – 6am on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights
- That the RMS work with local Councils to ensure pedestrian safety barriers are incorporated into the management of main roads, resulting in increased protection of pedestrians in the event that a crash is caused by a driver under the influence of alcohol
- That opportunities be investigated for a subsidised taxi fare scheme for young people on Centrelink and/or other benefits travelling between 9pm – 6am periods on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights