

# Community Relations Commission

For a multicultural NSW

4 NOV 2003

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: CRS/JH  
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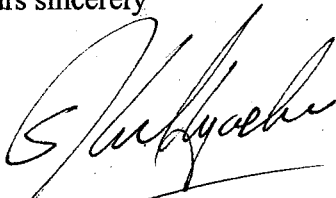
Ms Jan Burnswoods MLC  
Chair -Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Burnswoods

I am writing in response to your request for the Community Relations Commission to forward a submission in relation to the Inebriates Act 1912.

The Commission has prepared a response which is attached for your information.  
(See Tab 1)

Yours sincerely



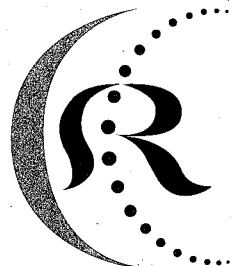
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## **Inquiry into the Inebriates Act – Community Relation Commission Submission**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Community Relations Commission (CRC) welcomes the opportunity to respond in relation to the Inquiry into the Inebriates Act. The CRC acknowledges the importance of ensuring legal information impacting on drug and alcohol issues and how this is to be managed is an area that needs to be made available to diverse communities.

The work of DAMEC (Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre) and a number of non-government agencies engaged in conducting various projects to better inform the community about alcohol treatment options, how to access services and ways that families can access support and skills to cope if they are living with an alcohol affected family member are key conduits for information dissemination regarding the Act.

From the contact that the Commission has had with communities through its various metropolitan and regional projects (often established to deal with crime and antisocial behaviour, domestic violence or community relationship difficulties), it is often identified that alcohol misuse can be a major issue for some communities and legal information because of the technical terms used is often poorly understood.

### **ISSUES**

In relation to informing and engaging the Non English Speaking community the following issues are paramount:

- **Explaining the language used in the Act in plain English is essential.**

Terminology such as “inebriate”, “institutions for inebriates” “recognizances” may well have been socially known in 1912 when the Act was first written but in modern times, such terminology is little understood nor readily translated into community languages. A more suitable phrase might be “a chronically drunk person.” Good examples of attempts to explain legal and drug information are the *Drugs Young people and the Law resource* funded through the NSW Attorney Generals Department which is available on the website [www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au](http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au). Information produced in this plain language format is very acceptable to the community and is used by community workers to inform and create greater awareness of issues.

- **Part 2:Control orders should ensure adequate support is available to the family**

The control orders of the act under “**Part 2 \*3 section e (pg 4)**” provide for the person to be placed in the care of a friend /relative /guardian where they are expected to in their “*control for a suggested period of up to 28 days*”. As withdrawal from alcohol carries serious physical and mental risks it suggested that this option without additional medical support as part of a co-authority with a relevant drug and alcohol treatment service provider, places a tremendous social burden on the culturally diverse family units and may increase the risk of family breakdown.

### **Effective methods of informing diverse communities**

A well developed marketing and dissemination plan for culturally diverse communities, means improving the readability of the Act in plain English. Different communities may need messages to be framed and adapted to their socio -cultural framework and acknowledgement of problematic use in their community.

For example, consumption of alcohol in many Non English Speaking communities may be regarded as “taboo”. Use of alcohol may simply not be acceptable for religious or cultural reasons. For these communities alcohol-related -problems may not be acknowledged and may be denied publicly.

Misuse or abuse of alcohol range can occur in the young, the elderly, and in families. Some target groups may have particular problems where alcohol problems are considered endemic and a significant anti-social issue affecting community harmony and family relationships e.g. Maori and other islander communities. The engagement of communities could focus on identification of how the Act addresses "problematic users"

**The effectiveness of the Act in linking persons to facilities and suggested suitable linkage improvements**

The Act is weak in relation to linkage improvements to community support groups such as Narconon, Alanon, Alcoholics Anonymous who often provide language support specific language groups eg Spanish AA group. The Act could be strengthened in this area eg:

"Where the inebriate is of Non-English speaking background, efforts will be made by the Governor/Court to ensure that the person has access to culturally appropriate community support services and bilingual medical services."

I hope the above comments and observations in relation to the Act assist the committee in their enquiry. Should you require any additional information please contact the following:

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