

Winners Without Drugs

"For God, Home and Humanity"

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From : 


November 13, 2003

The Hon, Jan Burnswood, MLC
Chair,
Standing Committee on Social Issues
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mrs. Burnswood,

RE : ENQUIRY INTO THE INEBRIATES ACT 1912

Your letter of October 20, 2003 to have with the request I make a Submission on the important issues raised by the inquiry terms of reference.

This indeed is a very important issue; I thank you for the opportunity to participate.

I would like to advise that the Women's Christian Temperance Union of NSW celebrates 121 year of activity in the field of alcohol abuse and other drugs. The zeal of the members has never wavered, but also understands that dealing with the issue of alcohol is not a popular subject. However, over the years and up to the present time, we have been pleased to be active. The motto from the beginning of the organization has been; FOR GOD HOME AND HUMANITY.

As God has guided the members from the start, the concern of all members has been for the HOME AND HUMANITY. For this reason W.C.T.U. was leader in the campaign for the women's vote.

I await the result of this inquiry, and of course the many other matters which will be discussed.

Yours sincerely,



B.A. CARDWELL (Mrs)
State President

Enc :

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

INQUIRY INTO THE INEBRIATES ACT 1912

COMPULSORY ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT UNDER THE ACT

The law which gives the right of arrest and control to police and the Courts must be retained for the following reasons:-

Unfortunately, alcohol is perceived by many in Australia, as part of the Australian culture. I believe that this not a statement that should be held up with pride in Australia. Consequently, for "6-7 % of the Australian population one glass containing alcohol is one too many, and one hundred are not enough" (Fitzgerald "Alcohol in Australia, Summit 26.8.03 Page 3"). This statement is **true and real**. The future leap in percentage will take place when one considers the rate alcohol consumption is increasing at a younger age. Offences related to alcohol have already increased markedly especially in drink-driving, domestic violence, the break-up of families, poverty, frequently brought about due to the family income being spent on alcohol, sickness and disease, under-age drinking, crime, public anxiety which necessitated alcohol free zones.

Some sympathy can be given to the inebriate; the condition does have a starting point perhaps even encouraged whilst under supervision as a child in the home. Growing into teenage hood the urge and encouragement grows until finally the condition has lead to that person being rejected by family, friends and even dismissal from the workplace. Sadly, the inebriate is a person who habitually uses intoxicating liquor or narcotic drugs to excess. Uncontrolled freedom leads to continual self harm and damage that only, and with the additional assistance of, the Law can the path to rehabilitation commence.

The Appropriateness and Effectiveness of the Act

The Act Part 2 (page 4) applications to commit inebriates; (refer clause e & g, page 5 (i & ii)). This section of the Act referring to the immediate care and attention of the inebriate is very important, his/her examination by a doctor appear in my judgment to be an appropriate method of evaluation and detention, I would rather see the inebriate not with family or friend but in the care of a hospital.

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From experience, greater authority can be maintained with that person in care, by a stranger, who is committed to enforce the rules and conditions of the Court, Judge or Magistrate. I would not recommend entry into a institution. At all times care should be taken to avoid self harm extending too regular inspections of the inebriate's possessions.

There should be no relaxation of the Law when dealing with inebriates. For those having committed an offence or serious crime whilst under the influence of either Alcohol or Drugs should be dealt with in a lawful manner. Many drug dependents often subsidize their habit by crime such as theft or assault the consequence of which must be dealt within the Law. Part of the education for either the alcoholic or addict is to realize the consequences and subsequent acceptance of the results of their unlawful actions. The public must not be made to suffer for their actions even though one may have sympathy for the accused.

Distinction can be attached to a drunken person who has not committed an offence under the law. An arrest for simple "drunkenness" could lead to a quick cure and establishes a solid base from which future arrests could be avoided. This type of person can be considered in a different category but it is hard to view this in isolation as it is often a symptom of wider social problems in society. For example, in the case of a female it could be one of the following:-

- a. trying to break the cycle of poverty and welfare dependence
- b. more access to pre and post marriage counseling
- c. more help and advice on child rearing

In the case of young people, who have broken the law with under age drinking, appropriate counseling should be commenced as quickly as possible such as :-

1. Instructions concerning the law and where they have broken it
2. Slow learners are often victims, a suitable education programme for teenagers should be commenced
3. more resources for school counselors, counselors trained in alcohol and drug dependency and their effects should be vital. This should be considered mandatory education programmes in High Schools.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union, for 121 years in New South Wales has always viewed prevention as the number one priority in dealing with social problems "*the fence at the top of the cliff is better than the ambulance at the bottom*" (quote from W.C.T.U. paper Vic).

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Suitable Treatment Facilities

Suitable treatment facilities are in short supply, and indeed costly to operate. However, the aim and care of the inebriate, with a high quality treatment and subsequent rehabilitation should be the aim of all concerned. Each person should have the opportunity to live a good and wholesome life, which produces good work for their wage, and for many to be within a happy family situation. The only way this can be achieved is for him/her to lead a life free from alcohol (total abstinence) and maintain his/her personal integrity.

This is a very large call upon the Australian society. Police, magistrates and care workers find their rehabilitation work undermined in inadequate resources. This problem has to be addressed by the Federal Government in consultation with the State Government.

Professor Ross Fitzgerald in his address "Alcohol in Australia" page 12, "*our aim should be to produce lasting solutions that will responsibly reduce public and private harm and enhance the common goal*" Prof Fitzgerald further states "*that an important first step would be for the liquor industry, along with the trade union movement and other large employers, including sporting organisations to support and fund an "Alcohol Institute".*"

This suggestion could be a first step to a good education for people of all ages. Unfortunately, the liquor trade has so far ignored this by continued publicity and sponsorship for sporting events, horse racing venues etc. Additional deplorable ways of advertising is the inclusion with monthly accounts including bank statements brochures encouraging the membership into Wine Clubs etc.

How can treatment and rehabilitation take place when so much advertising is constantly ***thrown at one?*** The legal drug alcohol, like the legal addiction to cigarette smoking has to be dealt with, and ***advertising must be curbed.***

The problem of alcoholism is growing, and from an earlier age the breweries and wine producers should have established heavily subsidized treatment facilities for addicts. The tax payer should not be expected to carry the cost for treatment of those addicts with uncontrollable behaviors or habits.

Many facilities are available with excellent programmes, e.g. The Salvation Army Miracle Haven at Morisset and Odyssey House in Sydney, Wesley Mission and Public Hospitals all have facilities, however these clinics are often understaffed and funds are not available for their continued rehabilitation and care. The training of health care workers with experience in alcohol related harm is low, there are few professionals in this vital area.

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Families are usually mostly affected with an inebriate within the family, that person may be a parent/s or a young family member. Assistance of a difference kind should be made available to people found in this situation.

On the other hand, often a family can be very supportive, having to manage and deal with just one within the family unit. These families should not be ignored but be consulted and encouraged to assist in the rehabilitation process of the inebriate. No one should feel "not wanted" or "embarrassed" or "feel inadequate", in the rehabilitation programme. As progress is seen the family can show the love and support the victim requires, in facing life again.

Links to Suitable Facilities

Sweden has in their report and subsequent legislation launched some very good initiatives. Under the heading "MOULDING OPINION AND PROVIDING INFORMATION" *"Reinforced efforts are needed at both national and local level to provide information and influence public opinion about the risks and harm caused by alcohol consumption, in the hope that this will induce, individuals to take greater responsibility for their drinking habits.*

The message should promote moderation AN ALCOHOL FREE ENVIROMENT during childhood, in transport, at work places, and during pregnancy. Municipalities, county councils, voluntary organizations, should be the main actors in moulding public opinion.

The local work should be supported by central efforts by various organizations, companies and so on at a national level. Those actors, that produce, sell or serve alcohol, have a responsibility to provide information about the risks of excessive consumption. Systembolaget AB (the Swedish retailing monoboly) HAS A PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE RISKS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION."

Five Options for Improving THE ACT WITH A FOCUS SAVING PERSONS

A

This option I have stopped at "saving persons"; this has been for a purpose. I believe if education commences at an age of understanding beginning with a child say 7 to 8 years, and in the years to follow school leaving age, this should stem the flow of drunkenness or binge drinking. The statement issued by the church decades past hold true "give me a child before his/she is 7" is one that can be implemented for alcohol education. What is now given as part of the alcohol education is not sufficient the FULL education on "what alcohol does to the body" and publicity given to binge drinking today is often seen with under age persons, definitely not just a 18 years and older.

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The theme always is drinking with moderation. Free will enters into each person's mind, and if they still proceed and fall into habitual drunkenness, one feels very sad but an attempt must be made for early education.

B

LOCAL OPTION must be made a legislative necessity. There are FAR TOO MANY AVAILABLE OUTLETS TO OBTAIN ALCOHOL. Hotels trade far too long. The so called "6 o'clock swill" was changed to 10 pm. However, the proliferation of licensed clubs such as sporting & bowling clubs etc have grown and all are licensed for the consumption of alcohol. The proliferation of "eating out" is popular activity today - usually most restaurants are licensed and if not BYO is the popular option. Casinos trade all night, and the proliferation of ALCOHOL OUTLETS is a real problem. It is these outlets, which have long hours, always very conveniently placed close to homes which also cause significant problems. Subsequently, this is now causing further concerns with alcohol being readily available so close to the home. Consequently it is very easy for the underage to (so called) "learn to drink responsibly". There are many known instances where children returning to an empty home are often involved in incidents involving alcohol.

THE ANSWER Legislation to be implemented on the establishment of outlets to enable residents to have their say A RETURN TO THE LOCAL OPTION. Clubs, casinos etc to be restricted to serving alcohol, other than in hours determined by legislation. Sweden has brought in legislation re the content and availability to young people, which is worth mentioning. **The Swedish Report - restricting access to alcohol and new initiatives is :-**

1. *Restricting access to alcohol*

To ensure that the applicable rules are observed, and that access to alcoholic beverages continues to be limited in the future, greater restrictions on the sale and serving of alcohol are needed at local level. In order to reduce the harm caused by alcohol, all municipalities should try to :-

- *adopt policy programmes that include rules for the supervision of alcohol*
- *effectively supervise companies that serve or sell alcohol*
- *offer training in the responsible handling of alcohol for alcohol licensees and their staff*
- *co-operate with the police authorities to counteract illegal dealing in alcohol.*

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Restricting the marketing of alcoholic beverages

To protect young people in particular, measures should be taken to prevent circumvention of the rules for advertising alcohol by marketing beverages of low content. A special commission has been appointed, inter alia to review the scope for restricting sports sponsorship by the alcohol industry.

Improving the skills of professional groups able to prevent alcohol-related harm

Implementation of the National Action Plan calls for a high level of competences among people engaged in preventative measures at different levels of society. The National Institute of Public Health has been instructed to draw a plan for in-service training.

2 Measures aimed at Young People

In addition to the targeted measures listed above, the Government and Riksdag consider that certain general measures to support children and young people must be reinforced and improved in order to prevent the consumption of alcohol by these groups.

The age of alcohol debut must be raised. In collaboration with the National Agency for Education and in consultation with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the National Institute of Public Health has been instructed to study measures that might reinforce efforts in schools to prevent alcohol damage. The measure can be addressed to school heads and teachers, for example.

3 Measures directed at Adults

Addressing general measures to adults has a good effect on both adults and their children. In collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health and the National Institute for Working Life, the National Board of Health and Welfare has been charged with developing methods of training more employees in primary health care and company health services concerning alcohol related harm.

Other important areas in which general measures should focus on adults are transport and pregnancy.

4a Transport and Alcohol

Efforts to reduce alcohol-related accidents in land and sea transport should be reinforced.

The National Road Administration has been requested to identify the measures that need to be taken in order to improve registration of alcohol-related accidents. The police will continue to give priority to their work to put a stop to drunken driving.

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4b Pregnancy and Alcohol

Efforts need to be reinforced and improved to reduce the risk of children being born with defects caused by material alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

5 Implementation of the National Action Plan

Financing

The Government has allocated SEK 550 million over three years to fund implementation of the measures to counteract alcohol-related harm. Of these funds, SEK 300 million is being allocated to reinforcing efforts in the municipalities. The country administrative board allocates funds to the municipalities in accordance with the directives drawn up by the Government. The remaining SEK 150 million is to be used by to increase support for developing international co-operation, voluntary organizations, research and further professional development.

The funds must also finance the assignments proposed and the costs arising in connection with the implementation of the Plan, including for example opinion-moulding, developing methods, follow up etc.

Alcohol Commission

The Government has appointed a commission, the Alcohol Commission, to co-ordinate national efforts. Its responsibilities include opinion-moulding and information campaigns.

In collaboration with voluntary associations, popular movements, trade organisations, companies, authorities, etc. The committee will also organize various conferences in order to make the contents of the Plan well known and to encourage the development of various local activities.

To encourage the development of long-term efforts the commission should be active throughout the period of the Plan.

Sweden has also implemented "Alcoholic beverages other than low alcohol beer may only be sold to persons 20 years of age and older. With instructions given to salespersons that buyers who look younger than 25 must have proof of identity". Perhaps if great quantity is purchased a card system for customers could be maintained, which would give identity to the function where the alcoholic drinks are to be consumed. (This of course could be a means of checking person's gate crashing parties).

Mention has been previously made (re insertion in many account statements). However, in addition, local community papers have many pages of liquor advertising, sporting fields, clothing worn by sportspeople who have been sponsored by the liquor industry.

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Unfortunately, far too many TV dramas, serials etc have alcohol to the fore, either drinking socially, and in the winning of trophies particularly in Car Races .. the mandatory champagne and unfortunately some sporting heroes have fallen "fowl" to alcohol along with the associated publicity of those misdemeanors they do not seek to offer any positive examples to young people who record them as heroes.

Smoking has all but been stopped in the majority of public and social areas and alcohol must also be dealt with by legislation to bring about the same effect.

Therefore in summary, the hours for serving alcohol in all locations mentioned above often enables people to drink rather than consume food. The further fact that Supermarkets sell alcoholic drinks enable people to include those purchases in their weekly shopping along with food encourage by such super marketing advertising as "cheap purchase of tinnies by the carton".

Funding Finance is always a problem, how can we implement these initiatives, where do we find the money? If more funding was available, there would not be the cost in many hospitals due to the constant care of inebriates.

Both State and Federal Governments should either implement a tax on all liquor outlets. And or the liquor industry to promote funding for the health care of inebriates and other people drink and drive causing death.

The summit had many strong facts concerning alcohol; Professor Tim Stockwell had some very telling statements.

Publicity to encourage Alcohol Drinking

- a. The wine cask - an Australian invention, cost per drink 36 cents per standard drink...known to be the beginning of encouraging people to acquire a taste for stronger alcohol.
- b. Australian beer stubby - approximately 360 million litres of full strength beer was consumed in NSW 2001, (approximately \$1.40 per standard drink)

Modern industrial production, storage, distribution and marketing now enables more alcohol to be drunk by more people and in more times, places and settings than ever before.

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"Comforting Myth" - the only problem with alcohol is that there are a few people who abuse it..

Alcohol Caused Harm in NSW - 1992 - 2001 -
Of 10,369 deaths and 537,742 hospital episodes in NSW due to alcohol over 10 years. 1. Intoxication caused adults at risk at least monthly; 51% deaths, 70% hospital episodes.

Regular use caused: 43% deaths, 14% hospital episodes, 9-6% adults at risk

Dependence use caused: 6% deaths, 16% hospital episodes, 3-5% adults at risk

Source : *National Alcohol Indicators Project*

UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH - MOST ALCOHOL CONSUMED IN AUSTRALIA PUTS THE DRINKER AT RISK OR HARM

These sad facts and statistics brought out at the Alcohol Summit, must bring the government to its knees. It is one thing to put out the hand for finance to run the state, but part of that running the state must be faced that **NEW LEGISLATION AND STRATEGIES IS AN URGENT BUSINESS FOR THE GOVERNMENT.**

Education as suggested must be implemented from an early age. New Legislation must be enacted to make inroads into society to help these people manage their lives better. **FINANCE MUST BE FROM NOT ADDITIONAL TAXES FROM THE PEOPLE OF NSW, BUT FINANCE must come from the Liquor trade in the form of a larger cost to the consumer, and taxes from the Liquor Industry.**

It is important to note the following *Working Group, Family Health and Well Being Issue Paper ... pages 2&3, that 81.4% of Australians over 14 years of age approve of the regular use of alcohol by an adult. 86% of males and 79% of females over the age of 14 years are drinkers. "It is important to know that alcohol abuse occurs in all strata's of Australian Society."*

Finally, this submission has stressed the importance of alcohol related incidents in particular on young people. It is the beginning of life that needs to be dealt with, to help save our future generations.

Therefore, more thought should be given to how young people could be reached.

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VENUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE is a recommendation. Local Councils, churches, and other groups could be contracted to promote such venues. In many areas there are no activities for young people, especially in the newer suburbs. Therefore the only way many feel that they can have a good time is binge drinking, crash parties, computer cafes etc.

Promotion of new initiatives for young groups and young adults Venues should be alcohol free, where the younger generation can enjoy their music, dancing, ten pin bowling outings, many a young person has learnt Chess, and gone on further to competition. Promotion of good healthy food habits, encouragement by famous athletes, swimmers or any young person who has achieved in the sporting field.

Legislation and a completely new outlook on what alcohol does to the human body, can be also part of the Narcotic programme, and the future of Australia will have a different picture.