

**Submission
No 50**

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

Organisation: Sutherland Shire Council

Name: Mr John Wilfred Rayner

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25 February 2013

The Chairman
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Chairman,

Inquiry into strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW
[In response, please quote File Ref: CMS/07/655675]

I refer to Item 5 in the Local Government and Shires Association's Local Government Weekly dated the 8th of February 2013 outlining the inquiry of the Standing Committee on Social Issues into strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW.

Sutherland Shire Council regularly works with licensed venues, the local Liquor Accords, the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, the NSW Police Force and other relevant stakeholders to address issues of alcohol related harm in young people in the Sutherland Shire. Some of the strategies Council has implemented to date include: monitoring alcohol related advertisements, educating local sports clubs, providing late-night transport options, running alcohol free music and sporting events and providing support for youth outreach services in the area.

As a Council, we have endeavoured to respond to community concerns related to alcohol abuse among young people and the strategies mentioned above, along with some others, will be expanded upon in the pages that follow.

I thank you and your fellow Committee members for giving relevant stakeholders the opportunity to provide information regarding alcohol abuse among young people. Sutherland Shire Council looks forward to working with you and other organisations to address this serious issue.

Yours faithfully

Marissa Racomelara
for J W Rayner
General Manager

SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES' INQUIRY INTO STRATEGIES TO REDUCE ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW:

The Standing Committee on Social Issues identified seven (7) areas of concern relating to alcohol abuse among young people in NSW:

- 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

In preparing Sutherland Shire Council's response to the terms of reference of the Committee, the following headings have been used:

- a) Advertising and promotion;
- b) Harm minimisation;
- c) Alcohol in the workplace;
- d) Drink driving;
- e) Alcohol related violence;
- f) Alcohol and the health system;
- g) Other relevant issues

Summary of recommendations

- 1. Provide incentives for all NSW sports clubs to participate in the Good Sports Program;
- 2. Provide greater funding opportunities to youth service organisations;

3. Consider providing funding to local PCYCs and/or Police local area commands to develop and run alcohol education programs;
4. Educate parents about their rights and responsibilities when providing alcohol to young people in their homes;
5. Encourage employers to develop a clear and concise drug and alcohol policy for their organisation;
6. Provide incentives for employers to implement mandatory drug and alcohol awareness training for all staff;
7. Educate employers about how to better and more appropriately manage younger staff;
8. Make drink driving and dangerous driving courses a mandatory part of obtaining a license;
9. Encourage the nomination of designated drivers;
10. Develop stronger partnerships in order to offer more affordable and accessible late night transport options for young people;
11. Raise awareness amongst young people that they may still be over the legal limit the morning after a night out;
12. Educate patrons about their rights and responsibilities whilst in licensed venues;
13. Develop management strategies for "pre-fuelling";
14. Create an alcohol related education program aimed at highlighting the potentially severe consequences of engaging in violent behaviour that must be completed by all offenders;
15. Develop an education/advertising campaign that clearly articulates the cost of alcohol related abuse among young people to the NSW health system;
16. Implement strategies aimed at targeting secondary supply;
17. Provide greater regulation of wholesalers selling alcohol over the internet.

Advertising and promotion

The greatest area of concern relating to advertising and promotion relates to sport. Participating in and watching sporting events is a significant part of Australian culture and forms the cornerstone of our country's national identity. For young people especially, local and national sports stars are often the people they admire most and

in whom they place their faith. While there are many benefits to this idolisation of the sporting elite, not least of which is the fact that it encourages young people to participate and thus aids them in maintaining their health and fitness, there are also a number of harmful consequences, including the close association of sport and alcohol.

For many years, sport and alcohol have been inextricably linked. Major sponsors, even of junior sport, are often large alcohol producing companies. Significant work needs to be done to break the link between sport and alcohol in the minds of younger generations in order that they don't grow up to associate one with the other.

From a Council perspective, significant time and resources have been invested into attempting to break this link at a local level. Council regularly encourages all local sports clubs to join the Good Sports Program which recognises clubs who put in place measures to ensure that they implement appropriate Responsible Service of Alcohol principles and restrict any sales or advertising of alcohol to senior matches. The program supports clubs to change their culture and reduce high risk drinking by encouraging each club to focus more on young people, families and participation. All clubs who apply for a liquor license must agree to join the program as membership of Good Sports has been incorporated into Council's liquor licensing policy.

Council also regularly meets with both the Miranda and Sutherland Liquor Accords in order to closely monitor the advertisement and promotion of alcohol in local licensed premises and the effect that this is having on local young people. Council further ensures that no youth events are associated with licensed premises or alcohol and will not accept any offers of support for the staging of these events from the liquor industry.

Recommendations:

1. Provide incentives for all NSW sports clubs to participate in the Good Sports Program if they wish to sell alcohol at their matches and/or events.

Harm minimisation

At a local level, youth service organisations play an important role in implementing alcohol harm minimisation strategies targeted at young people. Youth outreach workers regularly visit locations where young people are known to gather in

order to consume alcohol and they provide them with information about the dangers associated with underage and binge drinking along with referrals to local outreach services. In the Sutherland Shire, some of these youth organisations station themselves and a vehicle outside local bars and clubs and offer young people, water, lollies, advice and a lift home.

The local Police and PCYC also work closely together to run the Your Choice Program in the Sutherland Shire. Young people who are cautioned for underage drinking, drinking in public space or similar are referred to the program by the Police Youth Liaison Officer. At Your Choice, young people learn about the dangers associated with binge and excessive drinking and participate in discussions about how their drinking affects not only themselves but everyone close to them. Parents also attend this program and further discussion between parents and children is encouraged. Parents also learn techniques about how to broach the issue of alcohol abuse among young people so that they feel more comfortable talking about it with their children.

The consumption of alcohol by young people in local parks or on the street is a significant concern. If young people are going to drink, it would be safer for them to do so in an enclosed environment under the supervision of responsible adults. In this sort of environment, a responsible attitude toward drinking could be encouraged while still allowing young people to enjoy a drink and feel as if they were being treated with respect.

Recommendations:

2. Provide greater funding opportunities to youth service organisations as they have the knowledge, expertise and “on-the ground” presence to make a real difference to the numbers of alcohol related injuries and deaths that are occurring.
3. Consider providing funding to local PCYCs and/or Police local area commands to ensure that the Your Choice program can be implemented and sustained in all local government areas.
4. Educate parents as to their rights and responsibilities with regard to young people drinking on their property and provide incentives to parents to allow

gatherings at their homes where young people are permitted to drink in a safe, supervised environment.

Alcohol in the workplace

Council currently applies a “no alcohol” Policy for all employees when on duty. Each employee has also undergone alcohol and other drug awareness training and all employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities under Council’s drug and alcohol policy. The Policy is enforced by intermittent and random breath testing for staff at all levels and the policy clearly defines the parameters of a breach and the varying levels of consequence for employees should a breach be discovered. The policy was developed with extensive consultation with all staff and was adopted via a resolution of the Council.

Recommendations:

5. Encourage employers to develop a clear and concise drug and alcohol policy for their organisation as a whole in close consultation with staff so that all employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the policy.
6. Provide incentives for employers whose employees are required to undertake mandatory drug and alcohol awareness training.
7. Educate employers about how to better and more appropriately manage younger staff whose alcohol consumption is impacting on their ability to adequately perform their duties.

Drink driving

In order to reduce the amount of drink driving occurring in the Sutherland Shire, Council has implemented a number of programs aimed at providing safe transport options for residents and visitors alike.

Council has encouraged local licensees to provide funding, through the Liquor Accords for the establishment of a Shire Shuttle. This bus service provides a safe and free late night transport option for all patrons of the supporting licensed premises and services the vast majority of suburbs in the Sutherland Shire.

Further, Council, in conjunction with Transport for NSW, has established two secure taxi ranks in the entertainment hub of Cronulla, and the transport hub of

Sutherland. These taxi ranks operate at night on weekends and are staffed by contracted security guards. There has been a significant reduction in the level of anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related violence since the establishment of these taxi ranks.

Council is also in the process of working with the local Liquor Accords to implement a taxi voucher scheme which will allow for improved services for patrons, licensees and taxi companies alike.

Recommendations:

8. Make drink driving and dangerous driving courses a mandatory part of obtaining a license.
9. Encourage the nomination of designated drivers by providing incentives for licensed premises to offer driver stamps, free soft drink and meals or similar.
10. Develop stronger partnerships between state government, local government and private service providers to offer more affordable and accessible transport options to young people (shuttle buses to isolated areas, more frequent bus and train services that are connected to avoid large groups of alcohol affected people gathering on platforms).
11. Generate an education campaign aimed at raising awareness amongst young people that they may still be over the legal limit the morning after a night out.

Alcohol related violence

Council works closely with local licensees and members of the NSW Police Force through the local Liquor Accords in order to reduce alcohol related violence and the levels of intoxication in and around licensed venues.

Recommendations:

12. Roll out a state-wide education campaign aimed at educating patrons about their rights and responsibilities while in licensed venues and the penalties for misbehaviour.
13. Develop management strategies for "pre-fuelling"
14. Create an alcohol related education program in partnership with Police and youth and health service providers aimed at highlighting the potentially severe

consequences of engaging in violent behaviour that must be completed by all offenders.

Alcohol and the health system

Being a local government organisation, Council does not run programs specifically targeted at reducing the impact of alcohol related abuse among young people on the NSW health system. That being said, all of the aforementioned programs are aimed at reducing alcohol related abuse among young people in general and therefore have an indirect impact on the health system.

Recommendations:

15. Develop and roll out a state wide education/advertising campaign clearly articulating the costs of alcohol related abuse among young people to the health system each year and what the allocation of funds and resources towards treating this issue could be better used for.

Other relevant issues

The government should consider strategies targeting issues surrounding secondary supply and internet wholesalers.

Recommendations:

16. Develop strategies aimed at targeting secondary supply, including, but not limited to, people buying alcohol for minors in packaged liquor outlets and people buying alcohol for intoxicated friends in licensed venues.
17. Provide greater regulation of wholesalers selling alcohol over the internet and ensure that they have effective procedures in place in order to prevent minors from purchasing alcohol online.