

Leigh Clark Foundation

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Submission No. 69

(Youth Violence)

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Submission to:

Inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians

It is of concern to the Leigh Clark Foundation that alcohol and violence are commonly linked. Unfortunately it is all too common for the perpetrators and victims of violence to be under the age of legal purchase of alcohol. This is currently 18 years of age in all Australian jurisdictions. However the introduction to alcohol consumption below this age is not uncommon.

Despite the legal barrier on minors obtaining and consuming alcohol there are a number of mechanisms by which alcohol can be obtained by minors.

Parents are the most common source of alcohol for secondary school students, with 37% of 12- to 17-year-olds indicating their parents gave them their last drink ¹. The proportion of students whose parents supplied them with alcohol was significantly greater among younger students (39%) than older students (35%). The three main locations in which current student drinkers consumed alcohol were the family home, a friend's home or at a party.

Leigh Clark Foundation has no dispute with responsible parents introducing their children to alcohol in a controlled and responsible manner. Unfortunately in practice the initiation to alcohol is not always under ideal circumstances. This leads to the high potential of harm. The risk to underage drinkers has been identified by the NHMRC which released new Alcohol Guidelines in 2009 ² recommending that young people under the age of 18 do not drink alcohol at all.

An issue of particular concern to Leigh Clark Foundation is that it is legal in some jurisdictions (Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory) for any adult to supply alcohol to a child in private settings. In these States and territories there is no requirement for a child's parents to be present or give permission for the supply. Nor is there any requirement for the adequate supervision of the child. In short on private residential property in these jurisdictions, there are no controls whatever.

Three states have introduced (NSW, Queensland and Tasmania) have introduced legislation regulating the supply of alcohol to children under 18 years on private residential property. Under the Queensland model only a "responsible adult" for the young person is permitted to supply alcohol to a minor. There are further conditions on the amount of alcohol supplied and that adequate supervision is provided. Supply

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outside of these provisions is deemed to be “irresponsible supply” and is unlawful. It is highly significant that the Queensland legislation arose out of an inquiry into Youth Violence in Queensland³.

In New South Wales it is a defense to the charge of supplying alcohol to a minor if the person supplying alcohol to a minor to be a parent or guardian of the minor or have permission from the parent or guardian of the minor.

The Tasmanian legislation has elements common to both the NSW and Queensland legislation.

The Leigh Clark Foundation calls for the introduction of nationally consistent secondary supply legislation based closely on the Queensland model, accompanied by sanctions and a national comprehensive and uniform communication and education campaign targeting both parents and teenagers.



Bruce Clark
Director: Leigh Clark Foundation

1 White, V., & Hayman, J. (2006) Australian Secondary Students' Use of Alcohol Report, Centre for Behavioural Research at the Cancer Council Victoria, prepared for Drug Strategy Branch, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, available at [http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/85D7B21B3E3A993ECA2572250007755F/\\$File/mono58.pd](http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/85D7B21B3E3A993ECA2572250007755F/$File/mono58.pd)

2 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol, NHMRC, 2009. Available at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ds10syn.htm>

3 Youth Violence taskforce (2007) Youth Violence in Queensland: a report to Government. Available at http://www.stephenrobertsonmp.com/_dbase_upl/youthfinal.pdf

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