

**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE RE
“ALCOHOL REDUCTION BILL 2007” (Senator Fielding)**

This is submitted on behalf of WCTU Drug-Free Lifestyles of Victoria and we would congratulate Family First for endeavouring to take the first steps to changing our drinking culture. The time for action is now and the Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill is stage one.

The Objects of the proposed Act are admirable but we must not lose sight of the fact that binge drinking is applicable at any age – it is not specifically the young who are involved. The recent article “One for my pollie and one for the road” by Larissa Dubecki (The Age) developed an undignified, to say the least, side of our National Politicians and National Leaders and the unwritten role of alcohol in the leadership of our nation. Alcohol misuse is spread throughout our suburbs and towns and across every age group.

Culture change means it is a change for everyone.

We want to see changes introduced to

- prohibit advertising of alcohol on television and at cinemas
- ban sponsorship of sporting events or school student events such as rock concerts by alcohol companies
- ban all alcohol advertising aimed at children or portraying a successful lifestyle with glamorous models and inappropriate captions in public places such as tram shelters or train stations. The alcohol industry’s Self Regulating body should be scrapped and advertising pre-approved by an appointed government body.
- ban Board Drinking Games (available in Retail stores) which solely aim for the players to drink to excess
- ban promotions which encourage excessive drinking e.g. happy hours, drinking games etc in pubs and clubs
- ban vouchers for free liquor given to people making purchases at retail stores or petrol stations
- clarify supply of alcohol to minors with a National Code such as in NSW that “a person shall not, in any place whether or not licensed premises, sell or supply liquor to a person under the age of 18 years”
- ban products which cultivate the liking for the alcoholic taste such as where alcohol flavours and tastes are included in goods and foodstuffs such as lipbalm or chocolate biscuits

Education is important and a step in the right direction but not an end in itself. All people should be informed on how much alcohol is in a particular drink, what comprises a standard drink and the health risks of drinking beyond the recommended limit or drinking alcohol when pregnant or hoping to be pregnant.

A recent survey by “Choice” showed that 24% of 18 – 19 year olds were not aware that ‘Alcopops’ - those Ready to Drink’s brightly coloured in glass bottles – contained alcohol - obviously the label as to alcohol content was not an appropriate size or was completely ignored.

The size and the graphics on the label are the key. Miniature sized labels or very small sized fonts are of little use. We need tough labelling.

Pricing and Taxation

We would support the introduction of an alcoholic taxation system based on the alcoholic content. Minimum pricing control is also required so that promotions by retailers and suppliers cannot sell at sponsored reduced prices. Research points to the fact that pricing is a major deterrent affecting the level of alcohol consumption particularly among the young.

Liquor Licensing

The number of Licensed premises – nightclubs, bars etc. makes alcohol readily available and the Licenses do not provide adequate controls over the supply of alcohol as they are supposed to do. The law states that it is illegal to serve alcohol to an intoxicated person. However, this is seldom enforced. It would seem that, as is already done in some States, that Australia wide, the licensing and enforcement be delivered through the same body i.e. police not responsible for the enforcement of the law but that the Licensing Board would employ enforcement officers. The number of outlets only exacerbates the problems – availability means more alcohol sold.

I understand that in at least one district in the North Island of New Zealand if a person is arrested for a drinking offence they must name where their last drink was served and that becomes part of a file against the premises when it reaches a point of renewing/continuing the license.

In Britain, retailers caught selling alcohol to underage drinkers *more than once* will be closed.

Britain has recently reviewed their 24 hour Licensing Laws and has found a dramatic rise of 50% in disorder and alcohol related violence. This would seem to mean that earlier closing will help to reduce the anti-social behaviour.

The Australian Drinking Culture is irresponsible causing death, domestic violence and children at risk. It is expensive to our nation with health costs, social costs, a drain on the court system and prison resources.

Let's change the culture today. It is not acceptable, not cool, for anyone to drink over risky levels ("risky" as defined by the NHMRC Guidelines)

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