



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton



Queensland
Government

Minister for Health

MI152266
MO: H/08/01443

Senator Claire Moore
Senator for Queensland
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

24 APR 2008

Dear Senator *Moore*

Thank you for your letter dated 19 February 2008, on behalf of the Senate Community Affairs Committee, regarding the *Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007*.

Thank you for the invitation for Queensland Health to submit to the Senate Committee Inquiry on the *Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007*, and I am pleased to provide the attached submission to the Senate.

The Queensland Government is committed to preventing and reducing harmful alcohol consumption and the impact it has on the health, safety and well-being of individuals, families and the community. Under the *Queensland Drug Strategy 2006-2010*, the Queensland Government is implementing a range of initiatives including:

- social marketing campaigns to promote responsible drinking and increase awareness and understanding of the impacts of intoxication;
- legislation and regulation reforms;
- promoting and enhancing primary care for health promotion, prevention and treatment of alcohol misuse;
- promoting standard drinks labelling and monitoring of alcohol promotions and advertising; and
- programs addressing intoxication and public safety and amenity.

With regard to the key reform elements of the Bill, including the requirement for health information labels on alcohol beverages and strengthening regulation and restrictions on alcohol advertising, I am pleased to provide the following information.

Queensland Health is a representative on the national Monitoring of Alcohol Advertising Committee, which was established and endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy in May 2006. The Monitoring of Alcohol Advertising Committee is responsible for monitoring alcohol advertising and the self-regulatory system to ensure the alcohol beverage industry continues to comply with all Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy endorsed recommendations proposed by the former National Committee for the Review of Alcohol Advertising. The Monitoring of Alcohol Advertising Committee is also undertaking research to measure the impact of reforms to the system since the National Committee for the Review of Alcohol Advertising review.

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I am advised that Food Standards Australia New Zealand is currently considering an application from the Alcohol Advisor Council of New Zealand regarding pregnancy health advisory labels on alcohol beverages. Food Standards Australia New Zealand recently released the Initial Assessment Report for public consultation. Queensland Health supports, in principle, health advisory labels on alcohol beverages, however acknowledges there is limited research on the effectiveness of alcohol beverage labelling, and that health advisory labels should not occur in isolation.

In addition, the Council of Australian Governments at its meeting of 26 March 2008 agreed to the importance of addressing alcohol misuse and binge drinking. I am aware that the Council of Australian Governments has asked that the Australian New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council request that Food Standards Australia New Zealand consider mandatory health warnings on packaged alcohol.

Queensland Health is an active member of the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Working Party. This working party has brought together Australia's leading experts in Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, including Professor Elizabeth Elliott and Professor Carol Bower, to consider ways of improving diagnosis, interventions and support services.

The Queensland Government is also undertaking a comprehensive liquor reform program in Queensland to ensure that the current Liquor Act enhances community safety and amenity and reduces harms from alcohol misuse and abuse.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Mr Lance McCallum, Policy Advisor, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone (07) 3234 1191.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'STEPHEN ROBERTSON', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP

Queensland Health Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee on the *Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007*

Our commitment

In November 2006, the Queensland Government reaffirmed its commitment to harm minimisation through the endorsement and release of the *Queensland Drug Strategy 2006-2010*. The goal of the Drug Strategy is to improve health, social and economic outcomes by preventing the uptake of harmful drug use and reducing the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs in Queensland.

The *Queensland Drug Strategy* adopts the following principles:

- whole-of-Government approach
- collaboration and partnership with non-government and community sectors
- harm minimisation
- prevention, including broad-based interventions to address common determinants of social and health problems
- evidence-based approaches.

Harm minimisation is consistent with a comprehensive approach, involving a balance between supply, demand, and harm-reduction strategies. It encompasses:

- supply-reduction strategies to disrupt the production and supply of illicit drugs, and the control and regulation of legal substances
- demand-reduction strategies to prevent the uptake of harmful drug use, including abstinence orientated strategies and treatment to reduce drug use
- harm-reduction strategies to reduce drug-related harm to individuals and communities.

While the *Queensland Drug Strategy*, and the underlying principle of harm minimisation, provide a policy framework for all Queensland Government activities to address drug-related harm, the seven priorities for action over the next four years include:

1. alcohol, young people and young adults
2. tobacco control
3. Indigenous alcohol and drug use
4. treatment services, including services for those with a dual diagnosis
5. vulnerable and marginalised young people and volatile substance misuse
6. effective law enforcement, including liquor licensing
7. innovative criminal justice approaches.

Queensland initiatives

The Queensland Government is committed to preventing and reducing harmful alcohol consumption and the impact it has on the health, safety and well being of individuals, families and the community.

The Queensland Government is developing and implementing appropriate and sustainable approaches to support and increase the resilience of young people to prevent the uptake of harmful alcohol consumption, raise the community's awareness of the alcohol misuse and harms, promote responsible drinking behaviours, and reduce alcohol-related harms through targeted interventions which focus on particular groups, behaviours, drinking patterns and high-risk settings where alcohol-related harms are elevated.

Key strategies under the *Queensland Drug Strategy 2006-2010* include:

- Implementing social marketing campaigns to increase community awareness and understanding of the impacts of intoxication, and support and encourage young people not to drink, or to drink within low-risk guidelines. Campaigns focus on specific population groups including those identified through research as being at high risk of alcohol-related harm and receptive to change. Queensland Health recently launched the latest phase of the Young Women and Alcohol Campaign to encourage and support young women aged 18 to 22 years to change their harmful alcohol consumption behaviour.
- Enforcing the *Liquor Act 1992* to prevent and detect possible breaches by minors through the delivery of targeted and highly visible compliance operations, and enforce a state-wide ban on the advertising of drink promotions for on-premises consumption. The Queensland Government is undertaking a comprehensive Liquor Reform in Queensland. A Report on Liquor Reform in Queensland is available at <http://www.liquor.qld.gov.au/Liquor+Act+Review>
- Implementing the *State-wide Safety Action Plan* to improve community safety and amenity. The Plan includes the imposition of a state-wide 3am lockout and stricter liquor licence conditions on all operators trading in Queensland. The *Code of Practice for the Responsible Service, Supply and Promotion of Alcohol* which seeks to ensure liquor is served in a responsible manner and details how licensees and staff can identify and control the risks associated with the supply of liquor. The Code, among other things, indicates that premises should not promote drinking games or serve alcohol in other than standard measures.
- Implementing programs to address intoxication and public safety and amenity, for example, Queensland Health, in partnership with the Liquor Licensing Division of Treasury, implements the *Good Sports Program*, an initiative of the Australian Drug Foundation, which aims to shift the culture of smaller sporting clubs from being alcohol focused to one of family entertainment and responsible service of alcohol.
- Implementing community-based initiatives and programs under the *Strategic Policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People's Health 2005 to 2010*, to prevent and reduce harmful alcohol use among young Indigenous people, through awareness raising and community development initiatives.
- The *Alcohol and Other Substances Demand Reduction Program*, which is seeking to identify and implement a range of initiatives that can contribute to a reduction in the

demand for alcohol and other substances (including petrol sniffing) at the community level. The program also provides support to help build and maintain strong healthy families.

- Supporting the implementation of the Code of Practice for the Responsible Service, Supply and Promotion of Alcohol which seeks to ensure liquor is serviced in a responsible manner and to identify and control risks associated with the supply of liquor.
- Deterring drink driving by implementing education campaigns for at-risk groups and undertake police screening and detection operations.
- The *Queensland School Drug Education Strategy*, including the development of school and community responses to alcohol and other drug use, and constructive intervention with students involved in unsanctioned drug use at school.
- Parenting programs, including the *Triple P Positive Parenting Program*, which is a multi-level program derived from more than 15 years of research with a variety of different family population.
- Implementing workforce enhancements for the delivery of alcohol interventions and prevention programs.

The Queensland Government also is addressing the common determinants of social and health problems through a range of initiatives including *Education and Training Reforms for the Future*, *Supportive Families*, *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle*, *Community Renewal* program, and *Partnership Queensland: Future directions framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy in Queensland 2005-2010*.

Recommendations to the Australian Government

Queensland Health encourages the Australian Government to:

- recognise that any regulatory controls governing the broadcast of alcohol advertising will need to be national and therefore implemented by the Australian Government (this approach has been effective for tobacco advertising controls which are outside the retail environment)
- support pregnancy health advisory labels on alcohol beverages to inform women who are planning to become pregnant, or are pregnant, of the risks associated with consuming alcohol, and that label requirements form part of a broader strategy to raise women's awareness of the risks
- work collaboratively with State and Territory Governments and non-government organisations to help reduce the impact of harmful alcohol consumption and associated harms on families and the community
- support and implement drug policies and programs which are guided by harm minimisation
- increase investment in effective harm minimisation initiatives and prevention programs
- increase investment in community and human services, such as education, housing and transport, to help address common determinants of health and social problems, including those which influence drug use and drug-related problems
- increase investment in research to enhance evidence based practice.