

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

9 April 2008

**The Hon. A.L. EVANS:** The New South Wales government announced on Monday that, in the next few months, it will be releasing television advertisements aimed at 14 to 19 year olds, using graphic images and shaming tactics to curb binge drinking amongst young people. The *Daily Telegraph* newspaper in Sydney also reported on Monday that the New South Wales health minister said:

'...was shocked that hospitals were treating more than 1,700 children a year for alcohol abuse.'

In response, the New South Wales government will require teenagers who want to host large parties to register on a new police-run website called [www.mynight.com.au](http://www.mynight.com.au). This website advises young people how to idiot-proof and gatecrash-proof their homes, and suggests food and beverages to serve at the events.

My questions are:

1. What advertising campaign will the minister run to curb binge drinking amongst our young people?
2. Will the minister urge the police minister to follow the New South Wales police lead and set up a web site to notify police of large teenage parties?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health) (14:51):** I thank the honourable member for his most important questions. It is, indeed, a very serious issue for some of our young Australians and South Australians. Risky or high-risk alcohol consumption for short-term harm is defined as alcohol consumption greater than recommended in the

current Australian Alcohol Guidelines, and that is no more than six standard drinks on any one occasion for men and no more than four standard drinks on any one occasion for women. A review of these guidelines is currently being finalised and may result in changes to those recommendations, but they are currently the definitions.

In South Australia in 2006, 30.6 per cent of people aged 18 years and over drank at risky or high-risk levels for short-term harm. That is, indeed, a serious concern. In terms of the South Australian response, there is a wide range of ways that we are approaching this very complex problem. There are obviously many factors that contribute to binge drinking by both adults and young people, including individual, family and peers, what alcohol is being consumed, and the environment in which it occurs.

DASSA (Drug and Alcohol Services SA) has developed a range of strategies such as undertaking the development of the SA Alcohol Action Plan in consultation across government and non-government sectors. This plan is in the process of being developed and will support priorities identified in the SA Drug Strategy and the National Alcohol Strategy, so work is being done at that broad policy level.

The DASSA website provides comprehensive information about alcohol consumption and related harm, including sections that are specifically directed at parents and young people. DASSA, together with SA Police, the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner and SafeWork SA, developed a Safer Celebrations kit with approximately 20,000 information kits having been distributed to date. These resources were promoted in the lead-up to the Christmas and New Year period to encourage responsible drinking and safe partying, particularly during the festive season.

We also have a Good Sports programs that assists community sporting clubs to manage alcohol responsibly (they also encourage smoke-free environments, as well). Currently, 270 clubs are participating in that Good Sports program to promote responsible drinking, particularly aimed at young people. DASSA collaborates with Encounter Youth and health and emergency services to implement strategies to minimise binge drinking by school leavers at the annual schoolies festival in Victor Harbor. DASSA also liaises with key industry and government agencies through the Alcohol Management Reference Group.

The group enables broad discussion and dissemination of current trends across South Australia in alcohol consumption; alcohol-related harm; and health promotion, prevention and harm reduction activities. DASSA also works with education sectors to develop appropriate prevention and intervention strategies in those sectors to promote more responsible drinking.

I am very pleased to see the national interest we are seeing at the moment. Members would be aware that the Prime Minister has made a number of public statements since the beginning of the year, expressing his concern about the level of binge drinking in Australia. This has culminated in an announcement, on 10 March 2008, of a \$53 million National Binge Drinking Strategy.

This strategy is aimed at particularly young Australians and will focus on three main areas: \$14.4 million (over four years) to invest in community-level initiatives to confront the culture of binge drinking, particularly in sporting organisations; \$19.1 million (over four years) to intervene earlier to assist young people to ensure that they assume personal responsibility for binge drinking; and \$20 million (over two years) to fund advertising that confronts young people with the costs and consequences of binge drinking. This TV, radio and internet campaign will draw on the lessons of previous successful campaigns.

At the recent Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting, held on 26 March, there was agreement on the importance of tackling alcohol misuse and binge drinking amongst young people. It has agreed to look at a number of aspects in relation to binge drinking, and I believe one of those is to look at a national advertising campaign as well.