



22 January 2016

Consumer and Business Services
Attorney-General's Department
GPO Box 1719
Adelaide SA 5001

By email (CBSReforms@sa.gov.au) & by post

Dear Sir/ Madam

Liquor Licensing Discussion Paper – Provision of Alcohol to Minors on Private Premises

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) represents the interests of 96 Independent schools. South Australian Independent schools educate approximately 17% of all South Australian school students and the sector is the second largest provider of education to senior secondary students in the State.

The State Government's willingness to consider, in its review of the liquor licensing framework, whether, and how, to regulate the consumption and possession of alcohol by minors at private parties is a welcome development, in particular given its previous reticence to support legislative intervention in this area. With the recent passing of legislation regulating underage drinking on private premises in both Western Australia and the Northern Territory, South Australia now lags well behind all Australian States and Territories in its approach to this important issue. This is unacceptable.

The AISSA strongly supports a legislative approach to the provision of alcohol to minors on private premises and recommends that, as a matter of priority, the State Government introduce legislation to amend the *Liquor Licensing Act 1997* in order to prohibit the secondary supply of alcohol to minors on private premises, without the express consent of their parents/legal guardians. Legislation would send a clear signal to the community that the Government takes seriously the potential harmful effects of underage drinking and supports the rights of parents to make decisions regarding when and how their children access alcohol.

Parents should be the primary decision makers about whether their underage children are allowed to consume alcohol on private premises and under what circumstances. Legislation in this area would not only place an obligation on the holders of private parties to seek parental consent for young people under the age of 18 to consume alcohol on their premises but, importantly, would also provide support to parents of underage children, and indeed young people themselves, to say no.

The AISSA further recommends that the introduction of the legislation be accompanied by an education program which would provide information to all parents on their rights and responsibilities in this area and the potential harmful effects and risk factors associated with underage drinking.

It should be made clear that the problem of young people engaging in underage drinking is not confined to 17 year-old students which are just under the legal drinking age. The *National Drug Strategy Household Survey detailed report 2013*, for example, found that '15.4% of males and 11.3% of females aged 12–17' exceeded 'the adult guidelines for single occasion risk'. While the proportion of 12-17 year olds abstaining from alcohol increased between the 2010 and 2013 surveys, from 64% to 72%, this still indicates that 28% of the 12-17 year olds surveyed in 2013 were consuming alcohol. In this context I note that the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks From Drinking Alcohol* recommends that 'parents and carers should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important' and that 'for young people aged 15–17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.'

Underage drinking impacts on the health, safety, education and well-being of young people. The negative effects of alcohol, and in particular excessive drinking, on young people are well documented and include increasing the chance of young people engaging in risk-taking behaviours and also of experiencing violent incidents such as sexual assault and other forms of physical violence.

The AISSA is aware of arguments that legislation prohibiting the secondary supply of alcohol to minors on private premises without parental permission would be difficult to police. However, arguments such as these fundamentally misunderstand the positive role and value of legislation in this area in terms of preventing this behaviour. I note that substantial penalties apply in relation to breaches of the legislation in other states which, if introduced in South Australia, would likely act as a deterrent to many parents who may otherwise choose to supply alcohol to underage young people without the consent of their parents.

The AISSA recognises that legislation will not prevent all incidents of drinking by minors at private parties without parent consent. However, I reiterate that it would send a clear signal to parents and the community that the Government is serious about reducing levels of underage drinking and the harms associated with this practice.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue further and signal the AISSA's willingness to work with the Government on progressing this matter.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Executive

Copy to:

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