

ALCOHOL — HEALTH PROMOTIONS

385. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Mental Health:

Given the federal government's decision not to accept a volumetric alcohol tax to fund health promotion and buy out alcohol advertising in sport, television and radio programs before 8.30 pm —

- (1) Will the state government consider going it alone and introduce —
 - (a) restrictions on alcohol advertising;
 - (b) drink labelling by standard measures; and
 - (c) health promotion campaigns similar to the Quit campaign?
- (2) If not, why not?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the member for the question. The Minister for Mental Health is not aware that the Australian government has made any formal decisions on the volumetric alcohol tax; however, the minister is aware that the Henry review is currently considering a range of other tax-related matters.

- (1)-(2) (a) Alcohol advertising includes elements that are within the jurisdiction of the Australian government and some that lie within the jurisdiction of the Western Australian government. The Minister for Mental Health is concerned about the impact that alcohol advertising has upon Western Australian children and youth. There is clear evidence that they are grossly overexposed to alcohol advertising, and that this exposure is associated with risky alcohol use. For these reasons, the minister is prepared to investigate what can be done within Western Australian jurisdictional capability to reduce children's and young people's exposure to alcohol advertising. The minister will also continue to advocate nationally for action.

Incredibly, Western Australian research has shown that underage children and youth are regularly exposed to alcohol advertising on television during daytime children's viewing hours. This occurs through an anomaly in the self-regulatory code that prohibits alcoholic advertising during children's viewing hours, which are defined as being after 5.00 am and up to 8.30 pm, except during live sporting telecasts. Nearly nine out of 10 Western Australians support prohibiting alcohol advertising on television while children may be viewing. However, it is the Australian government that must be prepared to act.

The Minister for Mental Health will be attending the National Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy on 24 April 2009 and will discuss this and other matters designed to reduce binge drinking. Recommendations from this meeting will then be provided to a Council of Australian Governments meeting later this year.
- (b) No. Alcohol container labelling is a matter under the Australian government's jurisdiction; it lies outside the Western Australian government's jurisdiction. Standard drink labelling is a current requirement for all packaged alcohol. The matter of health warnings on alcohol labels has been referred to Food Standards Australia New Zealand by the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy for consideration.
- (c) Yes. The Western Australian government funds the Rethink Drink alcohol education campaign through a partnership between the Injury Control Council of WA and the Drug and Alcohol Office. The campaign is a long-term strategy aimed at reducing risky alcohol use through changing the acceptability of drunkenness within the community and creating safer drinking environments.