

BANNED DRINKERS REGISTER

**273. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to reducing alcohol-related harm in communities across Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house what steps this government is taking to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the banned drinkers register?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how the expanded banned drinkers register will complement existing liquor restrictions such as those recently applied in Carnarvon?

**Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:**

I thank the member for Geraldton for raising this issue and for being an advocate for a mature and considered approach to alcohol-related harm, particularly in the midwest.

- (1)–(2) It is true that the McGowan government is introducing new legislation to strengthen the banned drinkers register trial. We have listened to feedback. We have listened to all stakeholders, including licensees, police and health and community services, and we will get the balance right. The legislation will make the banned drinkers register mandatory for licensees in the trial areas. It will allow police and the courts to register individuals for alcohol-related offending, including alcohol-related violence and drink-driving, not just those offences in or near licensed premises. It will allow certain prescribed professionals, such as health professionals, specialist frontline staff and others, to refer individuals to the register. It will require online liquor retailers to check the register before going ahead with any sale and it will make it an offence for knowingly supplying liquor to banned individuals. However, it should be noted that the BDR is not a silver bullet; it is just one of the tools being used to reduce alcohol-related harm.

After a great deal of consideration, the director of Liquor Licensing recently made a decision to introduce alcohol restrictions in Carnarvon, effective immediately, to reduce alcohol abuse, violence and antisocial behaviour. This government makes no apologies; it congratulates the director of Liquor Licensing for the toughest restrictions in Western Australia and some of the toughest restrictions in the nation. Liquor stores and drive-throughs are no longer allowed to open in Carnarvon on Sundays and Mondays, and there are daily volume limits for takeaway liquor sales. Carnarvon has never had ongoing alcohol restrictions. It was time for action after the local liquor accord simply refused to act and respond to community concerns for action. It refused to implement any sensible restrictions of its own accord. There were two members of this chamber who were in a liquor accord meeting who can recall how a representative of a takeaway outlet and a certain hotel proprietor argued strongly for even the lightest restrictions. That accord could not do its job. The director of Liquor Licensing made a decision to act on this issue, and this government applauds her action.

The conditions being imposed on 10 licensees strikes a balance between the need to minimise harm by restricting the volume of alcohol that can be purchased daily and the ability for licensees to properly and efficiently run their businesses. People can still enjoy a drink responsibly at a licensed premise such as a hotel, restaurant or club, and tourists, station owners, pastoralists and anyone operating from a remote worksite are exempt from these restrictions. No-one is going to go thirsty in Carnarvon.

The extent of alcohol harm in Carnarvon, however, is evident and supported by these statistics, by the evidence that comes from that community almost daily in terms of information from St John Ambulance, police, school authorities and other agencies. We have seen homes destroyed, streets littered, bottles smashed, and children allowed to walk the streets after dark and sometimes too afraid to go home. This is a confronting crisis. The strong message from everyone—from the shire to police, community services and Indigenous leaders—is that alcohol abuse is the key cause of problems in Carnarvon.

As a government, we have been on the ground numerous times to listen and we are responding through the BDR. The director of Liquor Licensing has made her decision. That is why we are taking action to expand and strengthen the BDR. Again, I applaud the director for making the necessary decision to see meaningful change at last in Carnarvon.

*Distinguished Visitors — Paolo Crudele and Nicolo Costantini*

**The SPEAKER:** Just before I give the Leader of the Liberal Party the call, I would also like to welcome to the public gallery His Excellency the Ambassador of Italy, Mr Paolo Crudele, and our local consul, Mr Nicolo Costantini.