

LIQUOR RESTRICTIONS — CARNARVON

**139. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:**

I refer to the inquiry launched into the potential liquor restrictions for Carnarvon by the director of Liquor Licensing.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house what the inquiry has identified?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the community has responded to the proposal?

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

I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for the question and her concern about the impact of alcohol on communities across Western Australia.

- (1)–(2) I can confirm to the house that we are very much aware of the issues around Carnarvon. It has been discussed in this place previously. We know about the impact of alcohol abuse on that community. We know that Carnarvon is a unique regional town in that it has not had any serious alcohol restrictions. Unlike towns in the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the goldfields, it is not subject to section 64 restrictions in relation to takeaway alcohol or the banned drinkers register. It officially got its liquor accord only earlier this year. The member for North West Central appears to doubt that.

The application to be formally registered was processed only on 31 January this year after receiving the application 20 days before. When the department got an application for a liquor accord in Carnarvon to be formally recognised, it happened within 20 days. If we want to count working days, it is probably closer to two weeks. It was a very efficient turnaround. Even with that liquor accord, it did nothing. It was very frustrating for the members of that liquor accord, who included the police; community members; members of the Aboriginal community; and the chair, Eddie Smith, the shire president, who literally tore his hair out in frustration trying to get something done for that community but for the division amongst licensees.

Last night, I was made aware that the director of Liquor Licensing had initiated an inquiry into the extent of alcohol-related harm in Carnarvon. In my view, she had no choice, without local action. I commend and congratulate her for finally taking action. Just as locals have been telling us, the director of Liquor Licensing inquiry concluded that alcohol is a major contributor to crime, social and health issues in Carnarvon. As such, the director is proposing section 64 restrictions on the supply and sale of packaged liquor. Her proposals include prohibited alcohol sales on Sunday and Monday. No takeaway alcohol sales on Sunday and Monday is the proposal coming from the director of Liquor Licensing. There is also a proposal to limit opening hours for alcohol sales to between 12 noon and 7.00 pm on the other days of the week. Tough new restrictions on the amount of liquor purchased per customer per day are proposed.

Something had to be done. We know that the liquor accord was in a position to take local action and get local advice, but no action came. Nothing was proposed. Nothing was agreed. The DLL had to step in.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** People's lives were being ruined, member. People's lives are being ruined in Carnarvon. Kids are missing out on school. Parents are not there to look after those children. The statistics in Carnarvon are staggering.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** If the member wants to listen for a moment, I will tell her what is happening in Carnarvon. If the local member is not concerned, we are as a government and we want this action.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please, members!

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** We heard nothing—nada! Nothing from the liquor accord in Carnarvon—not a thing. Not one proposal came forward for accreditation or registration with the DLL.

Alcohol consumption per adult in Carnarvon is 2.4 times the overall WA rate based on population. Ambulance call-outs for alcohol-related trauma in Carnarvon are nine times higher on weekends when unrestricted liquor trade occurs. In 2022, alcohol-related crimes in Carnarvon were 16.2 times higher than the metropolitan average. The member of deaths attributed to alcohol —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please, members!

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** We are taking action. The director of Liquor Licensing had to take action. The number of deaths attributed to alcohol in Carnarvon —

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Madam Speaker —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** This point of order will be heard in silence.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The minister is giving a very important report on arrangements around liquor in Carnarvon, and there have been constant interjections, including what I think was an inappropriate interjection from the member for Central Wheatbelt.

**The SPEAKER:** Just on that point of order, I note that those opposite did not ask the question. Normally, I would not entertain their interjections; it is only because some of the minister's comments have been directed at those opposite that I have allowed some leeway for interjection. This question has taken too long to answer so far, so I ask those opposite not to continue to interject, and I will ask the minister to draw his answer to a close.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** Thank you, Speaker. I think these numbers and statistics are important to hear. Let us hear them in silence.

The number of deaths attributed to alcohol in Carnarvon was 151 per cent higher than for the rest of WA between 2010 and 2019. With regard to takeaway alcohol purchases in Carnarvon, it represents a massive 85 per cent of all liquor sold in Carnarvon compared with the state average of 60 per cent. The director of Liquor Licensing has listened. The government has also listened. We are implementing the BDR in Carnarvon and Gascoyne Junction as soon as possible.

I am advised that the director has written to the 10 relevant licensees who sell takeaway liquor in Carnarvon to advise them about these changes. Licensees have until 5 April to respond to the director of Liquor Licensing about her proposal. I add that there is nothing to stop licensees from acting before then; they can take these restrictions and implement them today if they wish, and I hope they do. The director will make a final decision on restrictions once the licensee feedback period has closed. However, we are already hearing strong support for tougher alcohol restrictions in Carnarvon from the shire president, Eddie Smith, to the police, the health workers and the agencies that have to deal with the fallout of young kids wandering the streets because it is not safe to go home. Once again, I commend the director of Liquor Licensing for initiating this inquiry into alcohol consumption in Carnarvon and the impact it is having on that community.