

BRIEF MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

MINISTER FOR RACING AND GAMING

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 10: ALCOHOL: REDUCING THE HARM AND CURBING THE CULTURE OF EXCESS

Mr Speaker the Education and Health Standing Committee recently conducted an Inquiry into the Adequacy and Appropriateness of Prevention and Treatment Services for Alcohol and Illicit Drug Problems in Western Australia and on the 23 June 2011 tabled its report Number 10 entitled-

“Alcohol: Reducing the Harm and Curbing the Culture of Excess”

Today, on behalf of the Government, I formally table the responses to the recommendations contained in the Report.

The report made 60 recommendations and sought responses to those recommendations from 11 Ministers including the Premier.

I don't propose to detail the response to each recommendation. However, I would like to touch broadly on a number of important issues that relate to my port folio responsibility of liquor licensing.

The Committee Chairman, in her foreword to the Report, commented that *“Most Western Australians, most of the time, consume alcohol responsibly.”*

I agree with this statement. However, the report goes on to make some far reaching recommendations that would impact on the majority of persons who enjoy alcohol responsibly – not just the minority who don't.

Yes, we do have some alcohol issues in our community. But, as I have stated many times in this place, I believe there is a need for balance in relation to this issue.

The rights of consumers to enjoy choice and diversity in the range of hospitality services available and the tourism, employment and business opportunities this brings to our State needs to be balanced against the need to ensure that the health and safety expectations of the community maintained.

Increasing the drinking age, using juveniles in enforcement operations, banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting organisations and introducing price controls are blunt instruments that the Government does not support.

The government believes that combining its current approach of targeting troublemakers whose alcohol abuse leads to anti-social behaviour, with an increased focus on education programs about responsible drinking presents the best way forward in seeking a balanced outcome.

The Report makes a number of recommendations for amendments to the Liquor Control Act, some of which are not necessarily opposed by the Government. However, the government believes that any proposed changes to the Act should be the subject of broad community and industry consultation and these issues will be considered when next the Act undergoes major consultative review.

I table the Government's response.