



30 July 2012

Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs,
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency Submission to House of Representatives Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Introduction

1. The Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the incidence and prevention of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).
2. ANZPAA is a joint initiative of the Australian and New Zealand Police Ministers and Commissioners and provides strategy and policy advice to the ANZPAA Board with respect to cross-jurisdictional policing activities that enhance community safety and security. The ANZPAA Board comprises the Police Commissioners of all jurisdictions of Australia and New Zealand, as well as representatives from Police Ministry and Justice agencies.
3. This submission provides a cross-jurisdictional policing perspective on addressing the impacts of alcohol-related harm. It is therefore mainly focused on the Inquiry's Terms of Reference 1 – Prevention Strategies.

General Comments

4. Policing has no expertise in FASD. Policing is however engaged daily with people who are affected by FASD or who are at risk of having the disorder develop in their unborn child through excessive consumption of alcohol. Policing sees FASD as just one of a wide range of adverse outcomes arising from risky consumption of alcohol in the community. The ANZPAA Board is fully committed to achieving cultural change in the way alcohol is excessively consumed by individuals.
5. The ANZPAA Board notes that the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) drinking guidelines were developed in 2009 as a way to assist people to make informed decisions about the consumption of alcohol.¹ Despite warnings of the risks, the National Drug Strategy Household Survey in 2010 found that 48% of women in Australia consumed alcohol during pregnancy.² The survey also showed that the number of people drinking alcohol in risky quantities in Australia increased from 3.5 million in 2007 to 3.7 million in 2010.³

¹ The National Health and Medical Research Council drinking guidelines, 2009

² National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2010

³ National Drug Strategy Household Survey Report, 2010, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011, Available [online] <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?=32212254712>

The Policing Response

6. Strategic guidance for the policing response in Australia and New Zealand is provided by Police Ministers as part of the Standing Council for Police and Emergency Management through the document "Directions in Australia New Zealand Policing 2012 – 2015"⁴. Direction 3: Safety provides a focus on alcohol and other drugs in stating:

Policing organisations should aim to reduce the impact of alcohol and drug-related harm by:

- *Continuously improving education, awareness and enforcement strategies*
 - *Developing innovative approaches with 'at risk' groups*
 - *Continuing to work with communities and partners on harm reduction*
 - *Supporting new ways of using science and technology in alcohol and drug detection.*
7. The policing community in Australia and New Zealand fully understands the impact of excessive alcohol consumption in communities, particularly those which have vulnerabilities, and across a wide range of offending. Alcohol is present in a substantial proportion of incidents that police attend, with around 40 per cent of people detained by police attributing their offence to alcohol consumption.⁵ Alcohol-related crime is estimated to cost Australia AU\$1.7b with AU\$750m alone spent on policing.⁶ Other statistics reveal that a substantial proportion of assaults are alcohol-related, with a significant portion of these ending in hospitalisation. It was reported that in Australia between 1993-4 and 2000-01 a total of 76,115 hospitalisations were a result of alcohol, with young people more likely to be hospitalised as a result of alcohol-related assaults compared to their older counterparts.⁷
8. In addition to Safety, the Directions in Australia and New Zealand Policing also address Communities and Crime. Policing is in no doubt that communities in general would be enhanced, and crime and other offending reduced, if there was a positive change in attitude amongst individuals towards the risky consumption of alcohol.
9. Each Australian State and Territory, and New Zealand, takes a range of strategic and operational approaches which address alcohol and drug-related harm. While these approaches vary according to the communities and environments served, they have consistent themes of raising awareness and focusing on bringing about lasting change in drinking behaviours.
10. Policing also fully understands that the most effective approaches to addressing alcohol-related harm will come through working with others who have a role to play, including the government, health, community and voluntary sectors. Police jurisdictions support, to the greatest extent possible, the collaborative endeavors reflected in the National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2011.

⁴ This document was approved by Ministers in SCPEM on 29 June 2012 and is available at anzpaa.org.au.

⁵ Donnelly, Neil, Linda Scott, Suzanne Poynton, Don Weatherburn, Marian Shanahan, and Frank Hansen. 2007. *Estimating the Short-Term Cost of Police Time Spent Dealing with Alcohol-Related Crime in NSW*. Monograph Series No. 25. Tasmania: National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund.

⁶ Donnelly, Neil, Linda Scott, Suzanne Poynton, Don Weatherburn, Marian Shanahan, and Frank Hansen. 2007. *Estimating the Short-Term Cost of Police Time Spent Dealing with Alcohol-Related Crime in NSW*. Monograph Series No. 25. Tasmania: National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund. [http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/ndlerf25.pdf/\\$file/ndlerf25.pdf](http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/ndlerf25.pdf/$file/ndlerf25.pdf)

⁷ Collins, David J., & Lapsley, Helen M. 2008. *The avoidable costs of alcohol abuse in Australia and the potential benefits of effective policies to reduce the social costs of alcohol*. National Drug Strategy Monograph Series No. 70. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing.

[http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/0A14D387E42AA201CA2574B3000028A8/\\$File/mo70.pdf](http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/0A14D387E42AA201CA2574B3000028A8/$File/mo70.pdf)



ANZPAA's Drug and Alcohol Strategy

11. From a cross-jurisdictional policing perspective, ANZPAA's Drug and Alcohol Strategy (a copy is at Attachment A) focuses on:

- increasing awareness of the impacts of drug and alcohol-related harm in the community
- strengthening partnerships with stakeholders and the community
- promoting knowledge and information sharing to inform policing responses to drug use and alcohol misuse.

12. The Strategy framework is based on the following three themes, and supported by a number of activities and initiatives.

12.1. **Communications** – especially exploring opportunities for police to influence debate and discussion on the issues related to alcohol misuse. Activities include:

- raising awareness within police jurisdictions of current issues and emerging trends relevant to alcohol misuse by publishing reports, news stories and media releases
- encouraging collective comment from a policing viewpoint on the release of new research, prospective changes in legislation, or to Parliamentary Inquiries
- exploring opportunities for collaborative activities, including education campaigns focused on young people, industry and the wider community to help prevent and respond to drug and alcohol-related harm.

12.2. **Partnerships** - strengthening relationships with partners who are also addressing drug and alcohol-related issues. Acknowledging that no single organization involved in the alcohol-related harm field has all the answers, policing is committed to keeping abreast of collaborative strategies and initiatives that work nationally and internationally through, for example:

- maintaining links with the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs and associated Standing Committees and Working Groups
- enhancing collaboration with research centres and other identified bodies such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund.
- supporting the sharing of experiences and professional networking available through initiatives such as the Australasian Drug and Alcohol Strategy Conference in New South Wales in 2013.

12.3. **Knowledge** – developing and maintaining an up-to-date evidence-based body of knowledge base is crucial to informing strategy development and good practice initiatives for policing. Policing is seeking to:

- continue monitoring emerging issues and trends
- Inform and influence future research priorities
- promote and facilitate information-sharing amongst policing and partners.

Operation Unite

13. The most publicly visible component of ANZPAA's cross-jurisdictional approach is Operation



Unite – a Blitz on Drunken Violence. This initiative began in 2009 and there have since been five cross-jurisdictional operations staged across Australia and New Zealand since then. The aim of the operation is to heighten community awareness of the issues associated with excessive alcohol consumption and related harms, and to provide a focus for jurisdiction-based activities in whatever areas of alcohol-related harm are the most important. Opportunities are taken to reinforce the message that police, frontline health workers and the wider community need to work together to reduce the impacts of alcohol-related harm.

14. Operation Unite has increased public discussion on these issues, and generally receives good media coverage. ANZPAA's analysis has shown that policing efforts under Operation Unite received wide support from a range of stakeholders, along with the community blogging, tweeting and commenting on media news stories. It not only invited general public awareness but also encouraged the alcohol and hospitality industry, community groups and other government bodies to think about the impact alcohol misuse has on the community.

Conclusion

15. The ANZPAA Board, including all Australian and New Zealand Police Commissioners, is fully committed to promoting greater public awareness of alcohol-related issues and associated harms in support of a community-wide change in attitudes towards alcohol consumption. The complexities of alcohol misuse require a collaborative approach by all those who have a part to play. While policing has no expertise in FASD, policing experiences the effects of FASD in individuals, and behaviour which puts an unborn child at risk of FASD, on a daily basis. Policing wants to see a positive societal change in alcohol consumption, and in achieving this, believes the community will see significant benefits including a reduction in FASD.
16. ANZPAA is appreciative of the opportunity to provide a submission to this Inquiry. If there are any queries regarding this submission, please contact the ANZPAA Chief Executive Officer, Jon White on (03) 9628 7222.



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ANZPAA Board Chair