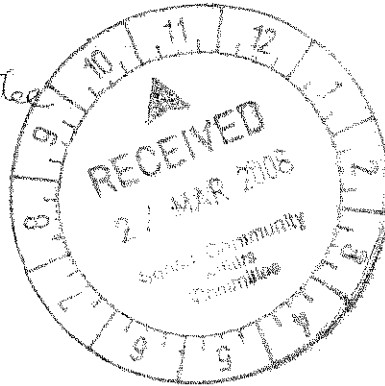


Elton Humphrey  
Committee Secretary  
Community Affairs Committee  
Parliament House  
ACT 2600



19/3/08

Dear Sir

Submissions to Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2008

I thank you for your invitation to put a submission to your enquiry into the above proposal.

I agree with Senator Fielding that 'we don't like to be sociable and to be part of the crowd'. I also agree that we have made attempts to tackle the road toll, drug toll and tobacco toll and that we should be proud we have had success. However as in life it is a matter of constant vigilance. The comments Senator Fielding makes about advertising and that it is sending the wrong messages, is true. There are also major problems with liquor licensing laws and liquor produced which is directly affecting our young people & damaging our moral values. As Senator Fielding says, it is one thing to say you are concerned about a

problem, and another thing to actually do something. We need government controls that continue to point out that materialism is not to be equated with sexual rules. If not enough concern is taken then matters driven by adversity, by self interest and by indifferent legislators will continue to be a national disgrace.

By way of personal introduction I have been a member of the Australian Family Association (National Council) for about 16 yrs. I am Christian and hope I am a product of positive values and aims. I was an army reservist for 20 yrs I have contributed to about 12 inquiries into family, child welfare and family law since 1991 as well as inquiries into drug and insurance matters. This country has a ~~strong~~ democratic tradition born out of hardship and it is one of our strengths.

I have no doubt that the pain caused by no fault divorce, family disintegration, the joint legislation & other sexual & social legislation is all part

of a continuing chain reaction effect. It continues to infect the attitudes of advertisers in a materialist and heathen process that shows no understanding or respect for the deeper issues such as family value and team ethics.

Individual organisations like Endeavour Forum, Skit Stakes, The Lyons Forum and many others over the past 20 yrs are forces for positive change. Peter Corbett (MP), Kevin Andrews (MP), Senator Robert Hill (until early 1990s) and many other people have been working on the strategy of incremental changes in our society. The main thing to realise is that ~~of~~ evil will continue to happen while good people stand by and do nothing.

I would refer you to the newspaper articles which I selected at random. Relevant articles are the Choice Magazine (March 2008), Annette Petre & Candice Houston The Age 25/2/08, Neil Mitchell (The Sun) 26/2/2008 but in fact all eight articles from Melbourne are relevant.

Our past is our heritage, the present

is our challenge and the future is our  
responsibility

yours faithfully

Brian Clarke

Attachments: (1) Chone article (Mar 2008)  
(2) Age article (11/3/08)  
(2) Age article (13/2/08)  
(2) Age article (27/2/08)  
(5) Sun article (27/2/08)  
(6) Age article 25/2/08  
(7) Age article 25/2/08  
(5) Age article 23/2/08  
(9) Age article 12/3/08

# Ready to drink?

Alcopops are the drink of choice for underage drinkers — their sweet flavours mask the taste of alcohol. Almost a third of CHOICE's teenage testers couldn't detect alcohol in a Vodka Mudshake.

## 'Do you think this contains alcohol?'

	YES (%)	NO (%)	UNSURE (%)
Alcopops (322)	69	24	7
Soft drinks (324)	9	85	5
Wine (81)	100	0	0
Beer (81)	100	0	0

The number in brackets is the number of times these drinks were tasted altogether.

As the table above shows, many of our teenage participants had difficulty detecting alcohol in the alcopops — only 69% thought they contained alcohol, compared with 100% correctly identifying the beer and wine as alcoholic drinks. Almost a quarter of the teenagers couldn't taste the alcohol in alcopops. They found it most difficult to identify it in Vodka Mudshake (which looks and tastes rather like a chocolate milkshake), particularly the males — only 51% thought this beverage contained alcohol. And these were 18 and 19-year-olds with some experience drinking alcohol; it's likely younger drinkers would find it even harder to tell.

According to one participant, "That's what these are great for — because they do taste like soft drink, it's good for kids that have no alcohol experience whatsoever, so they don't have to taste the alcohol and they don't realise how drunk they're getting."

And in terms of appeal, alcopops were the most popular alcoholic beverage in our trial — 60% of participants liked their taste (not far behind the 77% who liked the soft drinks), compared with 25% who liked wine and 38% beer. And they're even more appealing when you're younger, according to our 18–19-year-olds. Said one, "I used to drink all of these when I was a bit younger... Like when I was at school."

Alcopop producers use colours as shortcut cues to

## nutshell

▶ Alcopops are very appealing to younger people, and contribute to underage and binge drinking. In CHOICE's trial, 24% of the 18–19-year-olds thought there was no alcohol in the alcopops they tasted.

▶ The regulation of alcopops marketing — and of alcohol more generally — doesn't effectively protect teenagers. Parents need to open communication and get involved.

Many health and advocacy groups are concerned about the influence of premixed alcohols — known as ready-to-drinks (RTDs) — on teenage alcohol use. An RTD is part spirit or wine and part non-alcoholic drink, such as milk or a soft drink, bought in a premixed format. They're also known as 'alcopops' or 'designer' drinks.

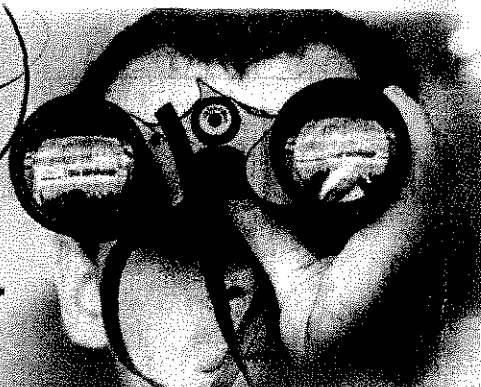
Research shows that alcopops are extremely popular with underage drinkers, and the drink of choice for underage binge drinkers. They're the most commonly consumed form of alcohol among 12–17-year-old girls, are considered an initiation drink by many young people, and have been described by industry and concerned groups alike as 'bridging' or 'gateway' beverages for less experienced drinkers, who aren't yet used to the taste of alcohol. Their popularity among younger teenagers has been attributed to their trendy packaging and sweet flavours, which can mask the taste of alcohol. As one journalist quipped, an alcopop is "a fizzy drink which allows alcohol to be introduced into the bloodstream while bypassing the taste buds".

With the above concerns in mind, we set out to find how easy it would be for young people (of drinking age, to keep it legal) to detect the presence of alcohol in alcopops and other alcoholic beverages, using a blind taste test that included a mixture of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. See *How we tested*, far right.

## SENATE INQUIRY

As we were going to press, the Senate agreed to an inquiry to examine Australia's alcohol toll. The Senate's Standing Committee on Community Affairs will examine a bill (proposed by Family First) that would require health information labels on alcohol, ads for alcohol to be approved by a government body and TV ads to be restricted to 9 pm to 5 am. Submissions to the inquiry are invited, which will report by 18 June 2008.

OTY SPIES (2)  
CHES TO DEBATE  
MONITORING PACT SPORT



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STEPHANIE ALEXANDER'S  
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ED IN MELBOURNE SINCE 1854

AUSTRALIA'S INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

TU

# Rudd targets booze 'epidemi'

ts clubs told to curb  
k culture, or lose cash

IAHAN  
LLER

a culture of binge drinking at sporting clubs for the rise of the problem, and threatened to punish clubs that did not tackle it.

Under his plan, the Government will spend \$14.4 million to help sporting clubs develop codes of conduct on binge drinking among their members.

The Government will also spend \$19.1 million on education and early intervention programs for teenagers, and



MULTIMEDIA LIFE AT FIFTEEN

► How The Age led the debate on under-age drinking [www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au)

previously on smoking, speeding motorists and AIDS.

The plan could also involve giving police more powers to confiscate alcohol and caution young binge drinkers.

13 or more standard drinks when they visited sporting clubs, Mr Rudd said the clubs would be expected to develop and conform to new codes of conduct for monitoring binge drinking on

## BINGE DRINKING STRATEGY

- \$14.4m grants-based program of anti-binge drinking projects at sporting clubs and other organisations
- \$19.1m on early intervention and diversion programs for under-18s. At least one pilot program in each state.
- Up to \$20m over two years for "hard-hitting" TV, radio and internet campaign confronting young people.

failed to co-operate, Mr Rudd said the Government would "take sporting organisations' actions on this question into account in the possible future consideration of grants".

the \$53 million for the program will be drawn from what the Prime Minister's office called "unspent health monies".

The announcement won support from health groups. "For the first time in more than a decade, the Federal Government has come up with a strategy for our biggest drug problem," said Daryl Smeaton, chief executive of the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation.

He said the strategy seemed to be based on "what we know works" — diversion programs for under-age drinkers, and a focus on sporting clubs.

"We have a major cultural issue in this country: the link between alcohol and sport," Mr

(players) learning from their fathers and models. They may be drinking a communal drinking club."

He said the ad campaign needed to — that alcohol was a drug. And it was parents it was not alcohol to children.

Australian Drinking Water Act acting chief of the Royal Commission on Alcoholism. Rogerson said the program needed encouragement being "just boys' time" on all the time."

The founder of the Sports program around the drinking clubs. One of the

# Study links alcohol sales and violence

3

## Call to regulate licensing approvals

By **JILL STARK**  
MEDICAL REPORTER

EVERY new bottle shop opened in a rural area will lead to 32 assaults, and each new pub in the city will spark 17 domestic violence cases, alcohol researchers have claimed.

Experts say a new study has for the first time confirmed a direct link between density of liquor outlets and alcohol-related violence.

They say it will give local communities stricken by alcohol abuse clear evidence of social harm when objecting to a new liquor licence.

Dr Tanya Chikritzhs of the National Drug Research Institute said the findings were the "tip of the iceberg".

"What we've presented is only the assaults that are reported to the police. Only around one in 10 domestic violence incidents actually get reported, so this is a much bigger problem than we thought," Dr Chikritzhs said.

"We're seeing more and more deregulation of the industry, everyone wants a liquor licence, even hairdressers and video stores. It shouldn't just be about open slather and profits for a minority when the majority wear the cost."

The study correlated assault figures with the number of "average-size" bottle shops and pubs to calculate additional annual assaults caused by a new outlet. Pub size was determined by beer sales at each venue.

The findings were based on

Western Australian outlets — one of only two states where licensees are legally required to report sales figures.

Dr Chikritzhs called on Victoria's liquor licensing body to make pub and bottle shop owners disclose their sales data.

"In order to reject a licence application there has to be evidence to show that it will end up adversely affecting the public health, safety and amenity of the community. But unfortunately in most states and territories that evidence doesn't exist in a usable form," she said.

VicHealth chief executive Todd Harper said liquor licensing bodies should consider the research when granting new licences.

"This is portraying the real consequences of outlet density. We now have some pretty powerful evidence that where we have existing levels of alcohol-caused harm in communities we certainly shouldn't be adding to the problem by creating new licences," he said.

The findings come as the Senate yesterday agreed to an inquiry into Family First's alcohol toll reduction bill.

The upper house's community affairs committee will investigate the bill, which proposes health warnings on alcohol products. Introduced last year by Senator Steve Fielding, it will also give government control over alcohol advertising and restrict marketing to young people.

A spokesman for Victoria's liquor licensing director did not return calls from *The Age*.



Zorro the wedge-

# Cod

By **BECK ELEVE**

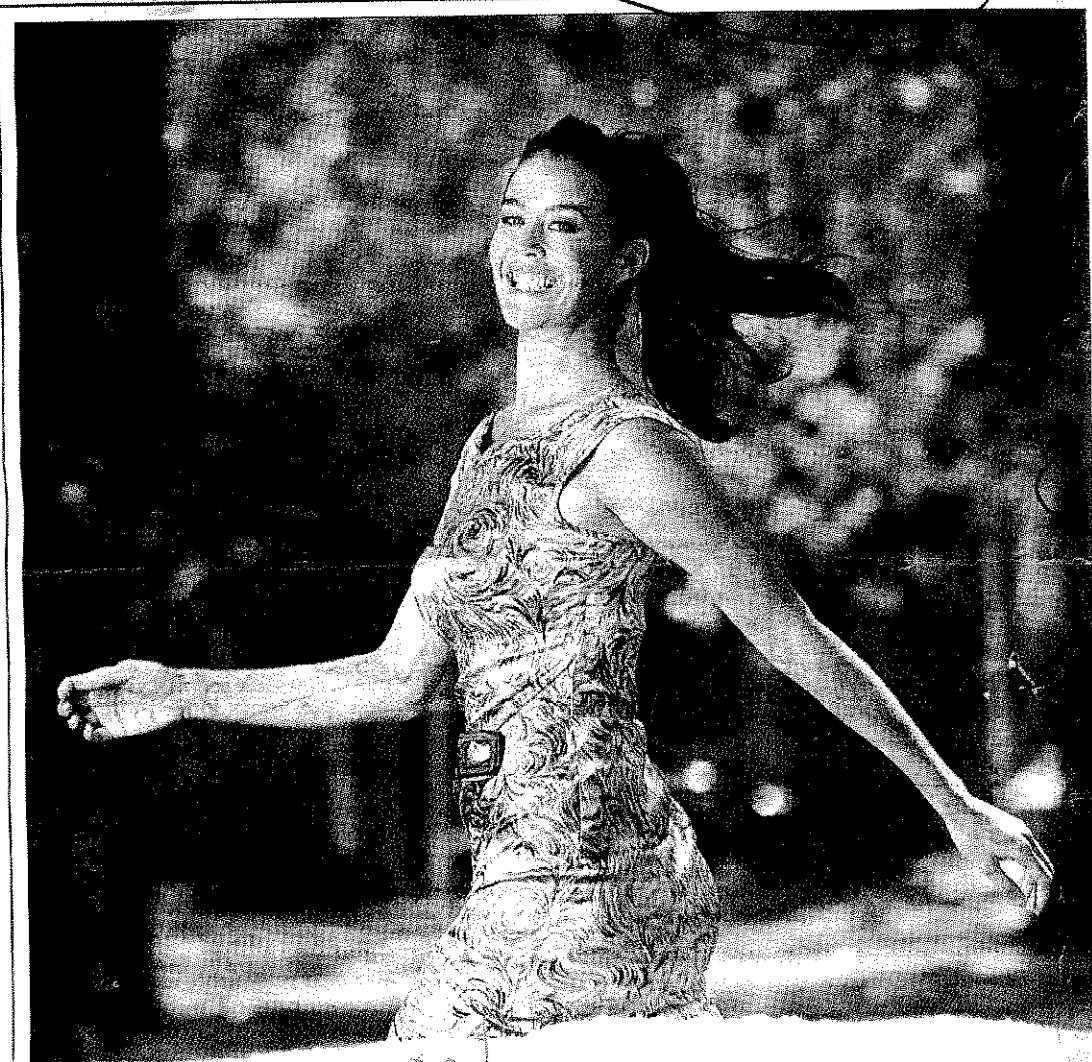
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the new winged j



Alcopop kick disguised by sugar, survey finds

4

# Sweet grog fools teens



ONE in four teens surveyed couldn't taste alcohol in sweetened ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages, new research has revealed.

Ten drinks — four soft drinks, four "alcopops", and beer and wine — were given to 78 testers, all aged 18 or 19. About 24 per cent couldn't taste the alcohol in the alcopops.

Choice spokesman Christopher Zinn said the results showed sugar and flavourings masked the taste of the 4-5 per cent alcohol in the drinks.

"And almost half the male testers couldn't taste the vodka in the chocolate milk vodka drink," he said.

He said the young generally didn't like alcohol, and flavoured alcopops were often an introduction to drinking. But he said binge-drinking couldn't be blamed on manufacturers alone.

Stephen Riden, spokesman for the Distilled Spir-

## Holly life

consumer reporter

its Industry Council of Australia, agreed, saying drinks were designed for those over 18.

"Inevitably, some of these products will appeal to those aged 15 and 16 who want to do the things that adults do," he said.

He said parents could take a tougher stance.

"Around 90 per cent of alcohol consumed by teenagers is bought for them by parents or older siblings," Mr Riden said.

But VicHealth CEO Todd Harper said if a drink tasted and looked non-alcoholic, it was obviously designed for the young.

"A lot of these drinks have a high sugar content to make them palatable for young drinkers. They are inexpensive, but have a high alcohol content.

"They give young people as much low-cost booze as possible," Mr Harper said.

Geoff Munro, the Aus-

tralian Drug Foundation's community alcohol action network director, said alcopops were disturbing.

"We know that premixed spirits are the preferred drink of young and underage drinkers, who put their safety and their health at risk by binge-drinking," he said.

Choice used Bacardi Breezer Raspberry (4.8 per cent alcohol), Ruski Lemon (4.8), Vodka Cruiser Passionfruit (5) and Vodka Mudshake Original Chocolate (4) in its testing.

Bacardi spokesman Colin Rochester said it was important to note that most testers could identify the alcoholic beverages.

He said Breezers were safe and convenient because they offered a standard alcohol amount and were difficult to spike.

"We are not blind to the fact that there are underage people who drink our products, and we are concerned about that," he said. "But it is part of a broader social issue."

## MPs on booze and cheers

POLITICIANS are feuding over the best way to deal with the alcohol scourge.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has promised to soon reveal plans to combat alcohol and drug abuse.

But Opposition health spokesman Joe Hockey said although the public

should be warned about the dangers of irresponsible drinking, politicians should not act like hypocrites.

"I think there's an element of hypocrisy in some people preaching abstinence or moderation then breaking the rules themselves," Mr Hockey said.

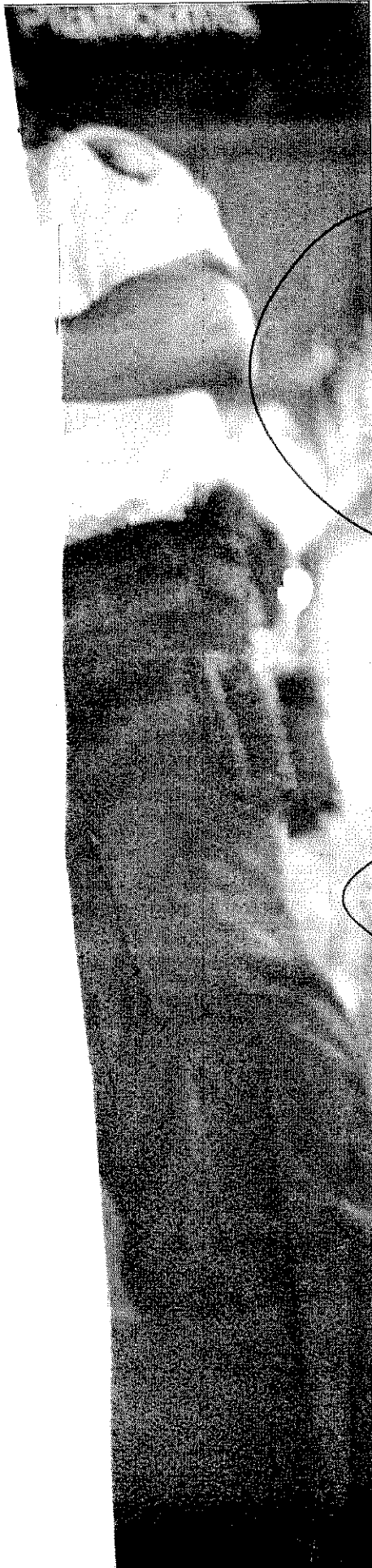
ACTION



# city of fear

5

ACTION



**O**n a wet Friday night your city smells of booze, blood, anger and fear. And it reeks of danger. It's too late to moralise. It's time to look urgently for answers.

But first, a snapshot of what unfolded four nights ago as I spent the night on Melbourne's streets with ambulance officers:

**Image 1:** a middle-aged man from Echuca is standing in the heart of town, opposite Flinders St railway station.

He, his son and three friends have just been bashed. It is approaching 1am and the man's emotions lurch from fury to helpless wailing.

He is bouncing one foot up and down, agitated. His whole body shakes. He has a nasty wound to the back of his head, a bruised face, and blood all over him. But he is lucky.

A few minutes earlier he was on the ground, semi-conscious, as a gang of 12 black men kicked him and smashed large pot plants around his head.

He could have died, which seems to dawn on him as he begins howling. Then the anger hits:

"The nigger will die!" he says. A black African man arrives to remonstrate, calling him racist.

The ambulance officers retreat, expecting more trouble that does not come.

The man's son is taken to hospital. The man claims they had not provoked the attack.

"Never, ever would you come back to this s---hole," he says.

"This used to be a beautiful place."

**Image 2:** barely 10pm in a back room of one of those huge swilling pits they call nightclubs.

A man in his late 20s is slumped on a chair. He wears suit pants, a loosened tie and two gashes across the top of his head.

He has been bleeding profusely and has a large green plastic rubbish bin in front of him into which he will later vomit in spectacular fashion.

An ambulance officer wearing blue surgical gloves steps forward to check his neck for injury.

The man's head flops about as if without support.

His eyes roll and close.

Ten metres away the dancing continues, the music thumps and drinks are thrown down with frenzy.

The paramedic says the man has an "altered state of consciousness".

This may be because of his head injury, but is probably the vast amount of alcohol he has pumped into himself.

He is taken to hospital with no idea what happened. A mate will insist later that he slipped and fell while in the bathroom. The ambos are sceptical.

**Image 3:** Queen St, about 11pm amid the new heart of lunacy on Melbourne streets.

Dozens of drunken people are on the footpath, most in their early 20s. "Slurping" is a gentle description of their behaviour.

NEIL MITCHELL



are so drunk they stumble. A man tries to piggyback a woman across the road and they both end up rolling in the gutter.

People lurch in front of cars. There's a real sense that the scene could turn sour and violent within minutes.

Stark images and all come from a night the experts say was comparatively quiet.

On Friday the rain didn't cleanse the streets.

The cricket crowds, the football crowds, even the protesting Serbs were not the problem.

Alcohol was. That and the stupidity of youth, a culture of aggression and the inevitable anger of white v black.

This city is so familiar, but the atmosphere is not. There have always been drunks and thugs. But the mood has changed.

The police agree, and Assistant Commissioner Gary Jamieson says his people are only "treading water" as they try to address what is happening.

The ambulance officers say the violence and drinking is much worse and even some of the nightclub operators warn it is out of control.

There is without question a booze-sodden culture that goes beyond drinking too much beer and urinating in the street, and instead focuses on "shots" of spirits, getting destructively "hammered" and fighting.

But the time to be appalled has passed. It is time for everybody involved to argue this out and do so in public.

That includes police, ambulance, nightclub owners, youth groups, licensing authorities and ~~local government~~.

They must look at everything: the emergence of this aggressive booze-until-you-fall culture, the licensing laws, the powers of police, a zero-tolerance strategy and the ridiculous planning laws that permit licences that are guaranteed to cause trouble.

The State Government has previously commissioned reports on the drug culture and the road toll.

What is happening in our town now is equally important.

Melbourne is kidding itself if it really believes it is one of the world's "most liveable" cities.

At night, at the weekend, it is a dangerous disgrace.

Don't dodge facts. There is an air of menace about our town and until it is cleared, it will keep decent people at home.

...referred the matter to Liquor ... forced to deal with a surge in drunken ... from the ...

# Thousands selling liquor illegally

## Booze, violence mar weekend

By **ANDREA PETRIE**  
and **CAMERON HOUSTON**

MORE than 2000 restaurants, bars and clubs across Victoria are believed to be operating illegally after the licensees failed to pay their annual renewal fees with the government licensing body.

Liquor Licensing director Sue Maclellan is understood to have issued thousands of suspension notices to affected licensees earlier this month, prohibiting them from operating unless payment was made.

Police have the authority to close down any licensed venue that does not carry appropriate accreditation.

The annual licensing fees, which range from \$170 to thousands of dollars — depending on the premises' hours of operations — expired at the

end of December. Licence holders had until January 22 to pay the fees.

An industry source told *The Age* that language barriers influenced the high number of restaurants involved.

He said some licensees could not afford to pay the fee while others had simply forgotten to pay. Some of the businesses had also ceased to operate.

Australian Hotels Association (Victoria) chief executive Brian Kearney said sporting clubs and smaller restaurants were likely to make up the bulk of those involved, and those still operating while suspended were doing so illegally. "Technically they are trading while their licence is suspended and the matter would be referred to the police if the matter is not promptly settled," he said.

If the licence is renewed before

June, the suspension is automatically lifted, he said.

A Liquor Licensing spokeswoman confirmed that the body had recently commenced its compliance program to ensure that licensees who failed to comply were given an opportunity to do so before further action was taken.

"Enforcement action is conducted by Victoria Police, however the compliance program is an escalated process, which helps distinguish between genuine licensing breaches and delays occurring in the course of day-to-day business operations," she said.

A Victoria Police spokeswoman said the force's licensing services division sent out information to local police so they could take action against those who failed to comply with requirements where necessary.

By **MARIO XUEREB**

ALCOHOL-fuelled violence in Melbourne over the weekend has been labelled the worst in recent months, with police declaring a breakdown of law and order in city party strips.

On the same day as an *Age* special report into CBD violence, police arrested 28 people for assault and other offences fuelled by too much alcohol.

A 19-year-old man suffered a suspected fit and a 17-year-old boy was knocked unconscious in a brawl between two groups of teenagers at Flinders Street station on Saturday night. The attack came hours after police subdued drunken brawlers with capsicum spray at the Men's Gallery strip club and three separate assaults in Fitzroy and Chinatown.

In the western suburbs, police charged four teenagers with attempted murder after an assault in Kealba left a 17-year-old boy with life-threatening head injuries.

"It was one of the busiest nights (we've) had for a long period of time," Deputy Commissioner Kieran Walsh said.

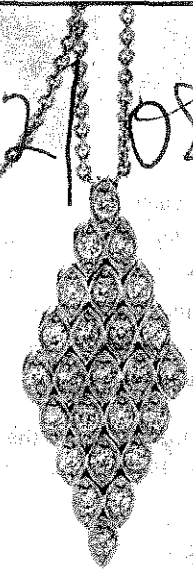
"I don't believe we've got a gang warfare problem, (but) we've certainly got an emerging problem about alcohol-fuelled violence," he said.

"What I'm saying is that in some parts of Melbourne, certainly around the nightclub strips, there is a deterioration of public order driven by alcohol."

He has called for a broad-based approach to the problem alongside government and liquor licence regulators.

*The Age* 25/2/08

JAN ♦ LOGAN



has been given.  
About 44% of voters say he has  
lived up to his promise to be an

steady on 10%.

Labor's vote after distribution

ACTION

# Alcohol abuse hits children as young as 12, cannabis use on

By JILL STARK  
and PETER KER

CHILDREN as young as 12 are seeking help for alcohol abuse as new figures from a major Melbourne drug treatment centre reveal a sixfold increase in cases of young people with drinking problems.

Some are drinking a slab of beer or a bottle of spirits a day and have developed serious health problems such as cirrhosis

of the liver or hepatitis C. Cannabis dependency has also risen sharply, with some children smoking it to block out the pain of abuse.

Youth workers from Victoria's biggest drug treatment service for under-21s, the Youth Substance Abuse Service, say alcohol and cannabis dependence are now more common than heroin addiction.

The new figures from the service come ahead of a separate

report to be released today from the Australian National Council on Drugs, which will warn that 20% of 16-year-olds are drinking to harmful levels in any given week, while one in every 200 children aged 12 is drinking at harmful levels.

The council's report combined several major statistical studies on substance abuse for the first time. It warned that extra support for the family members of young substance abusers —

including siblings — was needed.

Figures released to *The Age* show that the Youth Substance Abuse Service treated 776 cases of alcohol problems last year — up from 136 in 2002.

Cannabis cases rocketed from 608 to 1213, while heroin cases plummeted from 824 to 286.

The inhalation of toxic substances such as spray paint, glue and petrol (known as chroming) has also doubled.

And users are getting younger,

with 12 to 15-year-olds accounting for 12% of all drug treatments — up from 9% in 2002.

Across all ages, 40% of the service's clients have been diagnosed with a mental illness, such as drug-induced psychosis. Many have been kicked out of school and have lost contact with family.

Youth workers say children traumatised by bullying, sexual abuse and domestic violence are increasingly turning to alcohol and cannabis.

Ipsita Wright, director of the youth service's south-east region, said the void left by police crackdown on hard drugs such as heroin meant alcohol and cannabis were much more popular.

She said cheap, colourful alcopops were attractive to young people. "It's obviously intentional from a marketing perspective, and we see people who develop quite significant problems as a result of their alcohol use in terms of their physical health and

## Children as young as 12 seek help over drinking problem

◀ From PAGE 1

olds are still engaged with their families but may have behavioural issues like ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and may be self-medicating by smoking cannabis."

Today's Australian National Council on Drugs report will argue that alcohol and substance abuse is less likely among young people whose parents actively

disapprove of alcohol use. "Drug and alcohol use by young people has become normalised and is often seen as a rite of passage to adulthood," council chairman Dr John Herron said.

The report estimates that at least 451,000 Australian children are at risk of exposure to binge drinking by an adult.

One of the report's authors, Dr Sally Frye, said a family environment where children

were not exposed to alcohol was less likely to lead to binge drinking habits than one where parents try to gradually introduce their children to alcohol.

The report warns that siblings of substance users had a "significant" need for support, given evidence that sibling drug use may increase the likelihood of initial use by younger siblings.

"There appear to be a number of gaps in the provision

of services to family members, such as the delivery of services to siblings of substance users," the report says.

Mrs Wright said young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds were also a concern.

"We're starting to see more young people from African communities, and alcohol is the main issue. It's about wanting to fit into our way of living because alcohol in their own country was

not so readily available and here it's everywhere and not that expensive," she said.

"Some of them have fled war and have been living in refugee camps. One client had been in a camp for 17 years. He just did not want to remember any of that life and saw alcohol as a way of masking those memories."

This month marks the 10th anniversary of the Fitzroy-based Youth Substance Abuse Service,

which has helped 10,000 young people through residential rehabilitation, day centres, detoxification and counselling.

Mrs Wright said the support had saved lives. "For some young people the turning point may be a job or they may go through counselling and detox and are reunited with their family. I truly believe if we weren't there to intervene, then many of them may not be alive."

WATER

ODD SPOT

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MONEY PAGE 16  
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ACTION

# THE VIOLENT CBD Amid growing concern about assaults, hoteliers call for a freeze on new bars.

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
 by CAMERON HOUSTON,  
 CHRIS JOHNSTON  
 and PAUL AUSTIN

ALMOST three-quarters of Melbourne residents think the city is becoming more violent, an Age/Nielsen poll has found.  
 And as concerns grow about alcohol-fuelled assaults in the CBD, the Australian Hotels Association has taken the unprecedented step of calling for a freeze on new bars and nightclubs in the city centre.  
 The Police Association is also demanding its members be

armed with Taser stun guns to combat a sharp rise in assaults on police. And health experts are calling for a review of Victoria's liberal drinking laws, which have paved the way for the development of several "super clubs" such as CQ Bar on Queen Street, which is licensed for 6170 patrons.  
 Police Association assistant secretary Inspector Bruce McKenzie said the force was under siege and increasingly forced to use capsicum spray to quell brawls in the city.  
 "As far as capsicum spray goes, I don't know what our members ever did without it,

because we use gallons of the stuff," Mr McKenzie said.  
 AHA (Victoria) chief executive Brian Kearney said it had backed a temporary moratorium on new bars as a "circuit breaker".  
 "We've debated this long and hard in our organisation and think it's important to be part of the solution, not the problem."  
 The Age poll, taken over the past week, found 72% of Melbourne residents believe violence is increasing in the city, while 12% think it is decreasing.  
 Even so, only 28% think Melbourne is a worse place to live than it was five years ago, whereas 56% say it is better.  
 Located on four floors of the former RACV building, CQ Bar is allowed to serve alcohol "at any time on any day", according to its permit, and is within 200 metres of 12 other bars and a bottle shop. A members-only bar on the 15th floor of the same

building, Blue Diamond, is licensed for a further 1010 people.  
 Police have regularly complained of "alcohol-fuelled anarchy" in Melbourne's crowded late-night strip, which has angered city residents and caused regrets for the architect of Victoria's drinking laws, Professor John Nieuwenhuysen.  
 "This is definitely not what I had in mind," he said. "I was looking to promote a more European, civilised style of drinking, but we seem to have been swept away by a wave of binge drinking." "These places that disgorge thousands of people onto the streets are inherently dangerous."  
 Ironically, the Victorian licensing model was recently  
 ▶ Continued PAGE 4  
**INSIGHT**  
 ▶ Mean streets **INSIGHT 1**  
 ▶ Editorial **INSIGHT 8**

**MELBOURNE AND ITS POLICE: YOUR VIEW**

Would you say Melbourne is a better or worse place to live than it was five years ago?

Better	56%
Worse	28%
Don't Know	16%

Do you think that violence in Melbourne is increasing or decreasing?

Increasing	72%
Decreasing	12%
Don't Know	16%

Think about Victoria Police, how would you rate Christine Nixon's leadership of the force? Would you say it is...

Very Strong	21%
Strong	53%
Weak	15%
Very Weak	4%
Don't Know	7%

AGE/NIELSEN POLL

TITLE 8  
 THIS IS MELBOURNE AT NIGHT  
 "ALCOHOL FUELED ANARCHY"  
 SAT 23/2/08



ACTION

The Age  
12/3/08

WEDNESDAY

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## Confronting the demon of under-age alcohol abuse

AT THE end of last month, a research paper from the Australian National Council on Drugs provided graphic and disturbing evidence of the of alcohol abuse among young Australians in 10 people aged between 12 and 17 who drank too much alcohol in the past year and binge drinking — five or more standard drinks for a female and more than six for a male — was most pronounced among 16 and 17-year-olds, with one in five binge drinking at least once a week. "We've got the statistics and we need to do something about it now," the ANCD's chairman, Peter Dutton, said. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has responded swiftly. Monday Mr Rudd and his Health Minister Nicola Roxon, announced a \$53 million strategy to confront what he called the "demon of binge drinking". The Government program has three parts: \$14.4 million to fund sports clubs to develop codes of conduct for their members; \$19.1 million for intervention and diversion programs for young people under 18; and \$20 million over two years for a shock-tactics advertising campaign on lines of anti-smoking, road safety and AIDS campaigns. Mr Rudd has been



ling binge drinking. This is, he said, a step in the right direction. It will be reviewed in 12 months. The strategy has been welcomed by health and sports groups — as it is by this newspaper, which has long campaigned for a co-ordinated federal approach to this destructive social problem. The ominous thing is that binge drinking

over which parents have little control and, indeed, which can be inherited by teenagers as a family tradition resembling a rite of passage on the way to adulthood: the ANCD report found that more than 450,000 children lived in homes where adults binge drink. Somehow, as smoking, sex and driving became subject to greater scrutiny and con-

in terms of cost and harm caused, the effects of alcohol abuse are greater than those of all illicit drugs combined. As clinical psychologist Simon Crisp wrote in *The Age* on Monday, alcohol is a poison and neurotoxin, far from the "jolly juice" of popular myth. Last year the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines for safe drinking levels were drastically reduced from four and six standard drinks a day for women and men respectively, to two standard drinks for all adults and not drinking at all advised for children under 15 and pregnant women. What there has not been is any sense of co-ordination of policy. The cocktail of circumstances that comprises under-age alcohol abuse — lack of parental care or responsibility, availability of alcohol at social functions, insufficient awareness of the physical and psychological damage of binge drinking — is a lethal blend of the irresistible, unavoidable and just plain ignorance. Changing these perceptions requires time and various forms of education. Mr Rudd is right when he says teenage drinking is a question of personal responsibility. But if his proposal to work with parents, communities and schools to

to turn the problem around, however, there should be more strict and control the access to the young. For example, on a national basis the NSW law making it a criminal offence for parents to let 18s with alcohol. This, though, is a more complex mindshift than one parent and will also require co-ordination and territories to achieve. The Government has indicated that the Government will examine possible changes in labelling — factors that bear on making products more appealing to drinkers. Mr Rudd's determination appears direct and sound. The Government has indicated that sports codes of conduct could have their own withdrawal. Certainly the line between sport and booze is thin and that inspires for all the world. Changing this perception is a task on its own — but child protective measures are necessary.