

16/9/09



5

Curbing Misuse of Take-away Liquor

Dear Sirs,

I wrote to the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing and received a good reply from David McKarzel, Acting Executive Director. He encouraged me to lodge the same submission to the Law Justice and Safety Committee. Therefore I have enclosed that letter plus some additional thoughts.

Yours sincerely, Arthur Johnson.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Arthur Johnson".

Help Prevent Liquor Theft
Also: Responsible Drinker I.D.

Dear Sir,

I have already written elsewhere about the responsible drinker I.D. And only got polite replies but no action: even though lives are at stake. I now want to link this idea with preventing the theft of liquor by under-age drinkers.

I have recently completed a TAFE course: Diploma of Community Welfare. I have decided that my main use of this qualification is in mentoring and education of boys and youth; and their parents as well when this is possible.

Recently I attended a seminar which taught convincingly the dangers of teenage drinking: but only about 8 parents came to the very large school auditorium! So as I wrote above: "parents as well when this is possible".

A side issue regarding irresponsible drinking is the fact that so many people begin taking drugs or smoking marijuana, after intoxication!

Another side issue is that alcopops (is that the right word?) are deliberately made to imitate popular types of harmless soft drinks. I saw a blindfold test demonstration where the volunteers could not pick the harmless from the harmful by taste!

Therefore there are enough reasons for not simply relying on new policing laws to fix the problems which break up families. Prevention is also needed.

According to what I heard at the seminar, 73% of liquor is sold in bottle shops. Once the customer leaves the shop he or she cannot be watched or regulated as in a club.

Mr McKarzel pointed out eleven reforms amending the Liquor Act 1992, as passed on 10 September 2008. However these reforms cannot be properly applied to adults who buy on behalf of under-age drinkers; because the 'on behalf' fact can be hidden. But I can suggest one way with I.D., and another way with lockable microdot liquor carriers.

The I.D., regulates because the holder does not want to have it confiscated; and the lockable carrier assists the responsible drinker to keep his or her integrity safe.

Just as people who work with children need to apply for a blue card because bad types have made this necessary: it follows that responsible drinkers need to apply for a card of another colour, because bad types have made this necessary. I say olive green with face photo and other details printed thereon. These same people could also have an option for an orange spot (printed before the details) to indicate "responsible gambler".

Only those with clean police records could obtain such cards. The face on the card prevents handing around. In a bar or club, selling too much to a card holder would be fineable, as would selling to a non-card customer. A driver failing the breathalisher would lose his card. But if he said: "I have no card to surrender" then police could check records to see whether or not he lied. If he did lie he must surrender the card and be fined. If it was true that he did not have a card he could be in trouble for obtaining liquor without a card.

Linking the card with the microdot liquor carrier:-

The responsible drinker goes to the bottle shop, shows his card and is therefore allowed to purchase a quantity of liquor. He would know that it would be risky to take that liquor where underage people would be present. Doing so should be punishable by loss of card.

The same responsible drinker also has with him a lockable liquor carrier made of stainless steel. On various places of the carrier is the personal property microdot I.D. The customer pays for the liquor, loads the carrier, which can have wheels, locks it and takes it away.

If the customer does other shopping or other business: the carrier could be stolen from the car, or the whole car stolen. If he gets it safely home the carrier could still be stolen. But in each of the above three examples the thief must bust the lock, and dispose of the carrier (realising about the microdots). Breaking the lock would take time and the action would have to be secret. Disposing of the carrier could be tricky to do without someone observing. And even if this was accomplished then finger prints may still be traceable.

If the customer had a teenager living in the home, or as a regular visitor; he or she would know how foolish it would be to leave the carrier unlocked (or the fridge unlocked).

Any drink related misdemeanour of a teenager associated with that customer; would mean that the customer could not claim theft and therefore would have to admit to allowing the young person access.

The cost of a carrier would be more than offset by the fact that take-away liquor is cheaper. Also only one carrier per customer needs to be purchased. It could also be handy when camping. Wheels may add to its appeal.

In the pub, or the club, or at a large private dinner which included liquor: the card is presented for one drink at a time. In the case of a private dinner, a drinks table could be set up with a monitor in charge who knows all or most of the people at the dinner. This monitor could then say: "That is your last one John (or Jenny)".

The Mayor of Melbourne, Robert Doyle proposed the red and yellow cards. Yellow cards as a warning when someone seems to have had enough; and red cards to warn of a soon throw-out if you don't leave right now.

This system warns too late, and I said so in a letter to Mr Doyle. He gave a good reply saying that my suggestion would be considered. I don't know yet whether it has been considered.

I included the orange spot for gamblers for those of limited financial means; to try to protect their families from needless poverty; and to enable prosecution for not paying rent or other important bills.

Back in my third par of this letter I quoted a poor attendance of parents to an important seminar. This indicates to me the necessity of advertisements in Sunday newspapers declaring the facts and statistics of teenage drinking. Education against apathy is a great need. If the liquor trade is already controlled enough, then it is now the turn of some customers to learn responsibility.

Yours sincerely, Arthur Johnson.