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Submission to the Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Violence in Queensland
by Michael Smalley
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Alcohol is an intoxicating drug and can lead to addiction. It affects the mind and unfortunately the younger adolescent teens can have permanent damage inflicted on themselves due to excessive consumption.

Put bluntly the youths who are still adolescent can believe that they can act responsibly and obviously many don't. The mature and prominent adults who hold responsible positions of influence should change society's attitude and alter the existing laws that allow the youths to control their own consumption. A tough stand should be made now to limit the PUBLIC legal drinking age to 21 years of age.

Society has accepted that alcohol should be considered as a standard drinking beverage. The consequences from the various degrees of access to social drinking and drug consumption amongst our youth have caused various degrees of violence with death and severe injuries due to road trauma and brawling, suicide and accidental overdose.

Limit the consumption of alcohol in hotels, clubs or other public venues to only those over 21 years of age. The youths who are over 18 years of age may be allowed to still consume alcohol legally at private venues in the presence of a parent or similar adult holding supervision such as at birthday parties. This loophole is only to provide adult supervision to prevent binge drinking and complete intoxication.

The spiking of drinks also is in this league where the responsible drinker may become intoxicated without being aware of their drink content. The use of plastic or alternative glass containers is controversial and may be necessary to prevent glass injuries, however an extension from this could see the design of the container change where it may incorporate a lock down capping rim to prevent the contents becoming contaminated by spiking from an unknown substance. This application could also keep the beverage from spilling and thus reduce the need of the drinker to rapidly consume the contents when the container is carried away.

A reduction in the alcoholic strength of most beverages at public venues should also be strongly encouraged more than it has in the past and thus become the standard drinking strength as with mid strength beers and low alcohol spirits and wines.

Attention should be drawn to the media coverage of casual drinking and restrict images of these as it does with tobacco. There are many mature age celebrities voicing their regrets with alcohol abuse and drugs, they openly state their determination to get off this addiction. This message is voiced by many well known music artists of the 60s and 70s. Alcohol is a drug and the advertising should be dealt with as if it were a pharmaceutical drug and warn of the dangers of the contents affecting perception and alertness.

The benefits of drinking alcohol can loosen up a person's inhibitions and bring out a jovial sense of humour so as to be at ease. This is recognised very well

but it can bring out a violent nature particularly when too much is consumed and discipline has to be enforced to prevent this. Those persons who become violent when drinking should be harshly dealt with no soft reprimands.

This submission also follows onto the next stage of this topic and that is the training, education and media censorship within our society to help direct the social behaviour and attitude of our developing youth to be encouraged to become responsible citizens. This should NOT be left to the schools and regular educators. This requires a co-operative application to every commercial and public sector of our society to take charge of our youth and train them for tomorrow. What happened to the days of the popular "Boy Scouts" and "Girl Guides", church youth movements and social youth clubs? They have fallen victim from media attention to popular sports events turning some of our youth into aspiring sporting stars who are paraded as incompetent in the social infrastructure.

Turn back the clock please! We should be ashamed of ourselves and held liable for purging the young minds into believing that the youths of today can act independently taking control. As the younger generations of today mature, they should be able to have respect and discipline. There are many things we have ignored in this treatment of our young society, and the address on the alcoholic consumption of our youth is probably a very good start to rectify this.

In my submission I have to emphasise that the powers that hold control in our community should be strong and rigid in dealing with law and order, right through to the punishment sector of the courts. The message has to be strong that these liberties will be removed because of the few who abuse the system and have inflicted antisocial behaviour in our society that is costing lives and freedom of many innocent people.

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