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Law, Justice and Safety
Committee

Is fining parents the answer?

Dear Barbara Stone,

I was pleased to receive a copy of the Interim Report for: "Inquiry into Alcohol-Related Violence". As I read through it I marked with a red pen, items I thought significant: 17 in all.

In this letter I will only comment on the items relating to parent teenager problems. They are problems until they are solved; we must not use any euphemism.

On page 3, par 2 of the report (referring to Queensland's young people): "As the next generation of patrons to frequent Queensland's licensed venues, it is important to discuss this matter with them now." I guess that this statement implies that the community does not need or want uncontrollable patrons in licensed venues in a few years from now. I can certainly agree with this.

But will discussion be enough? Having reached teenage under the 'guidance' of their 'role model' parents: they would surely consider themselves as independent adults, who "just need a little more experience". I put the words 'guidance' and 'role model' in quotes because if they really were guided by real role model parents, they would not be the problem that they now are.

Even worse than not being role models: on page 7, par 3: "full consent and support of their parents, often by way of purchase of alcohol."

On the bottom of page 6 is the alarming statement of the cultural shift: from drinking as an element of socialisation – to drinking to become intoxicated. This may mean that orderly socialisation is a lost art, and it may have also been a lost art for the parents. I don't know, I only have a diploma, not a Ph.D in psychology. Perhaps such a person should be consulted.

The age range of the parents could be between 40 and 55. Even some of the older ones could have been minded as children by the TV, and had parents who were among the earlier rebels. So it would have been a natural flow-on for their children to have been minded by TV. This means lack of play with parents. Also some of these older parents were among the first group where both parents were employed in order to gain a home of their own: another block to parent-child interaction. And the younger the parents are, of today's teenagers: the more likely for these factors to be so.

I believe that social drinking was more often done at home when I was growing up. I remember that if my dad had a mate visit, he would take a bottle of beer from the fridge, they would have a glass each, then the remainder would go back into the fridge. I shared my 21st party with a young lady down the street, born on the same day. Her father paid for the hall and the party. Those attending were all ages. There was some alcoholic beverage but no one misbehaved. I also attended parties with young people only, in homes. No one misbehaved. There certainly is, a cultural shift!

I cannot see therefore, that discussion could be enough with young people, nor with their parents. Parents could seem to be agreeable because they would not want to appear to be uninterested or ignorant.

Therefore I feel that what needs to be done is this: police should take erring or intoxicated teenagers home and heavily fine the parents by use of a ticket handed to them at the door. If the parents cannot be located then the ticket can be sent by registered post. After one or two heavy fines parents would probably find a way to control the teen, or seek professional help. (Or maybe an alternative idea can be found before March 18.)

Finally, children learn violence from parents and/or TV, videos and computer games. The par at the top of page 7 shows frightening statistics that indicate these influences. I can only guess that the reason girls are becoming more violent is that they are over-copying the boys.

Yours sincerely, Arthur Johnson. Diploma of Community Welfare Work.

