



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard 13 March 2003

ALCOHOL RELATED DEATHS

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.18 a.m.): I received a copy of a letter sent to managers of licensed premises from Carlton United Breweries promoting a new high-alcohol mix of beer and vodka and it brought home to me the irresponsibility of such companies prepared to make money and play Russian roulette with the lives of our youth.

Alcohol is the greatest cause of drug related deaths for Australian youth under 24 years of age as it is responsible for 71 per cent of drug-induced deaths in the 15- to 34-year age group. The greatest proportion of these alcohol related deaths result from car accidents. It is recognised by medical insurance and motoring groups that people under 25 are the main age group involved in serious accidents. CUB is targeting a product that has 'strong appeal amongst 18- to 24-year-old drinkers'. The highest driver alcohol related fatalities are in the 17- to 24-year age group with an increase from 17 per cent of all fatal accidents in 2000 up to 33 per cent in 2001. It can only be described as reprehensible that this company is targeting this particular age group with an alcoholic drink of six per cent.

With the emphasis on reducing the road toll through extensive campaigns to refrain from drink driving, aimed especially at the young, this product is the tip of the iceberg in promoting stronger, mind-impairing alcohol on our young and it must be condemned. Some 32 per cent of road deaths involved pedestrians under 17 years of age and alcohol was a contributing factor in 50 per cent of these fatalities. It has also been reported that 64 per cent of males and 42 per cent of females over 14 years of age reported that they drink alcohol one or two days per week and by the age of 16 some 50 per cent of school students claim to drink regularly. These are kids who attend schoolies week and who partake in binge drinking, the aim of which is to get off your face as quickly as possible. It was cited that binge drinking was the major factor in most instances of unruly and dangerous behaviour at schoolies week.

I do not know a lot about alcohol, but I have been told by several very heavy drinkers that mixing such a concoction is popular with alcoholics. So why, then, are we allowing mixes of beer and spirit to be sold and promoted to our young people? I believe that this House must take up the challenge and stop blatant exploitation of youth.

Time expired.