

Public Service of Alcohol Youth Bill 2008

Explanatory Notes

Short title of the Youth Bill

The short title of the Youth Bill is the *Public Service of Alcohol Youth Bill 2008*.

Objectives of the Youth Bill

The objective of the Youth Bill is to implement a changed standard for public consumption of alcohol in licensed premises in Queensland.

Alcohol abuse is one of the most prevalent issues affecting young people and their health today, as alcohol is the most commonly used and abused recreational drug in Australia. Alcohol is widely used and accepted in our society and has become a part of Australian culture. Excessive consumption of alcohol, more commonly known as binge drinking, has been one of the major issues stemming from alcohol consumption among young people. Over the last decade the prevalence of alcohol use and binge drinking among young people has increased with 14 being the average age of first consumption of alcoholic substances.

This generation of drinkers start younger and indulge in binge drinking to a greater extent than any previous generation. Because of this, we are yet to see the long term damaging effects of binge drinking on this generation. Young people who have participated in excessive drinking habits over the last 10 years may have caused permanent damage to their bodies without their knowledge.

The teenage years are a critical stage in a young person's development. The brain undergoes a lot of changes and research continues to demonstrate that the effects on the brain from heavy drinking during this period leads to memory loss and learning difficulties.

When it comes to alcohol, parents are their children's most influential role models and young people tend to follow their parents drinking behaviours. This influence is at its strongest before a young person has tried alcohol.

Studies have shown that what and how parents teach their teenagers about alcohol consumption plays a major role in a young person's decisions about drinking.

Society needs to place the responsibility of managing and monitoring the alcohol consumption of young people in the hands of parents. Giving parents a greater opportunity to make a positive impact in their children's lives around responsible alcohol consumption would hopefully not only reduce the apathetic attitude of young people to the dangers of excessive consumption but also offer alternative help to reduce alcohol related injuries and deaths.

The *Public Service of Alcohol Youth Bill 2008* proposes the implementation of greater powers for guardians to act as positive role models for young people regarding the responsible consumption of alcohol. This Bill offers a holistic approach to the prevalent drinking concerns which society currently faces by decreasing the legal age for consumption of alcohol in a licensed venue to 16 years of age, in placing limitations on the purchase and the concentration of alcoholic beverages for those aged under 21 and implementing educational and promotional campaigns aimed at encouraging responsible consumption of alcohol.

By receiving greater responsibility, parents will be able to demonstrate conscientious drinking and will create better child/parent connections. Furthermore it will encourage family unity and binding by including rather than excluding younger members in the family from participating in what may already be natural in the home.

There is an existing awareness in society of the consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol and the damaging health effects. This Bill offers a positive action aimed at stopping the destructive binge drinking cycle by presenting greater guidance and support for young people, and parents, to be better prepared for the temptations and ultimately the risks associated with excessive consumption of alcohol. The time to act is now rather than waiting to learn from our mistakes.