

TAKE ACTION!

Secondary Supply – who’s buying your child alcohol?

‘Secondary supply’ refers to the provision of alcohol to people under the age of 18, usually by an adult person who is not employed to sell alcohol.

While children below 18 are generally not permitted to drink on licensed premises, most States and Territories do not restrict young people drinking on private premises, so underage persons can be supplied with and consume an unlimited amount of alcohol in private settings.

The supply of alcohol to young people has grown as an issue for the community over the last decade. It has coincided with the rise in concern over high risk drinking by adolescents, its potential impact on immediate and longer term health and safety, and the realisation of the role adults play in providing comparatively large amounts of alcohol to children, or enabling them to drink in risky circumstances.

In recent years, adolescents have died or have been severely and permanently injured due to negligence shown by an adult in providing an excessive amount of alcohol to them and failing to supervise the subsequent consumption.

The National Health and Medical Research Council advises that young people under 18 years should avoid alcohol as early drinking increases the likelihood of accidents and injuries, physical and mental health conditions, anti-social behaviour, risk taking and later alcohol dependence. The brain is likely to be more sensitive to damage from alcohol in childhood and adolescence as it is still developing, leading to learning difficulties and memory problems.

In particular, the NHMRC states persons under 15 years should not drink any alcohol, and if persons aged 16-17 drink alcohol they should consume as little as possible, and never more than two standard drinks on any occasion.

Secondary Supply Laws

Three states – NSW, QLD and TAS – now control the supply of alcohol to minors on private property.

In each jurisdiction the law states only a parent - or an adult acting in the place of the parent, or with the formal approval of the parent - can supply a minor with alcohol in a private residence. In two states a second offence of ‘irresponsible supply’ occurs when a person provides an excessive amount of alcohol or does not supervise the minor’s consumption of that alcohol to ensure it is consumed safely.

The Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) believes that any alcohol consumption by minors should be controlled by their parent, or equivalent, in order to

reduce young people's access to alcohol, and to reduce the likelihood of harm in instances where young people do drink alcohol.

The ADF supports the NHMRC alcohol guidelines and believes 'secondary supply' legislation, with the following features, is required in every jurisdiction:

- That an adult must not supply alcohol to a minor at a private place unless the adult is a parent or legal guardian of the minor, or has specific permission of the parent or guardian, and
- That the adult must supply alcohol in a responsible manner and ensure that it is consumed safely.

The ADF believes national application of this model would have several benefits. It would:

- Ensure that parents have greater control over the drinking of their children;
- Provide greater education in the community about the dangers inherent in allowing children and minors to drink;
- Encourage adults to avoid supplying alcohol to children and minors;
- Reduce the prevalence and incidence of underage drinking and the risk of harm; and
- Provide a community standard regarding underage drinking in the absence of a readily accepted social norm.

What you can do

1. Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon. Lisa Neville
Minister for Community Services
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000
E-mail:
lisa.neville@parliament.vic.gov.au
Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon John Brumby
Premier
PO Box 4912VV
Melbourne, Victoria, 3002
E-mail:
john.brumby@parliament.vic.gov.au
u
Salutation: Dear Premier

Mary Wooldridge MLA
Shadow Minister for Community
Services
Suite 2, 1020 Doncaster Road
Doncaster East VIC 3109
E-mail:
mary.wooldridge@parliament.vic.gov.au
u
Salutation: Dear Ms Wooldridge

Mr Ted Baillieu
Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
East Melbourne
E-mail:
ted.baillieu@parliament.vic.gov.au
Salutation: Dear Mr Baillieu

Points to make in your letters:

- Note with concern that adults can supply an unlimited amount of alcohol to a child on a private premise in Victoria without the permission of the child's parents.
- Urge that the Victorian Government introduces "secondary supply" legislation to prohibit the supply of alcohol to children and minors without the permission of parents or guardians.
- Note that such legislation already exists in Queensland, NSW and Tasmania.
- Point out that such legislation will make adults more cautious about supplying alcohol to other people's children where they do not have explicit permission to do so. This will also empower parents to be able to take action where an adult has supplied alcohol to their children without their permission.

2. Join up to receive our e-newsletter, GrogWatch for regular updates – email CAAN@adf.org.au

3. Join our database of supporters – email CAAN@adf.org.au