



Media release

The Hon Mary Wooldridge MP

Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Women's Affairs
Minister for Community Services

Wednesday 5 October 2011

Campaign to make Victorians aware of new law on supply of alcohol to minors

A \$1 million education campaign about the supply of alcohol to minors was unveiled today by Mental Health Minister Mary Wooldridge.

Ms Wooldridge said the campaign – a joint initiative between the Victorian Government, VicHealth and the Australian Drug Foundation – will ensure young Victorians and parents are aware of a new law governing the supply of alcohol to people under the age of 18.

“The campaign goes to the heart of the issue: what the new law involves and why supplying alcohol to young people can cause harm,” Ms Wooldridge said.

“The Coalition Government is delivering on its election commitment to ban adults supplying alcohol to minors in a private residence – unless parental consent is given.

“Previous law on the supply of alcohol to minors did not apply to private residences, which on occasion resulted in irresponsible adults supplying significant amounts of alcohol to minors without their parents’ knowledge.

“From 1 November these people could face fines up to \$7,000 or more if they flout this new law.”

Ms Wooldridge said the education and awareness campaign will feature advertisements in newspapers, on bus and tram stops and online; a comprehensive new website featuring webinars, podcasts and community forums.

“I am very proud we are combining the introduction of new laws with an education campaign that is significant in terms of getting these messages across and working to change outcomes in relation to young people engaged in risky drinking behaviour.”

Ms Wooldridge said the new law puts control back into the hands of parents.

“We aren’t seeking to limit decisions parents make in relation to their children, but we are seeking to limit the decisions that other people make in relation to children who are not their own.”

Ms Wooldridge said there are many good reasons to encourage teenagers not to drink alcohol before turning 18.

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“Early drinking is related to increased alcohol consumption in adolescence and young adulthood which can possibly lead to damage to the developing brain and other alcohol-related harms in adulthood,” Ms Wooldridge said.

Acting CEO of VicHealth Associate Professor John Fitzgerald commended the Victorian Government’s decision to take action to reduce risky drinking among Victoria’s young people.

“Alcohol consumption is one of the biggest social issues facing Victoria’s young people,” Associate Prof Fitzgerald said.

“This new legislation will support parents, providing them a greater opportunity to make positive and responsible decisions regarding their children’s contact with alcohol.

“The new legislation provides clarity for parents, and makes it clear to all adults to think twice before they provide someone else’s child with alcohol.

“The message is clear – no permission, no alcohol.”

Chief Executive of the Australian Drug Foundation Mr John Rogerson also welcomed the new laws as a positive preventive health measure that enables parents to have much more influence over their child’s drinking.

One third of all Victorian secondary students are binge drinking each week and that puts them at risk of short term harms, such as injury or sexual assault. This new law will help prevent those harms.

“The Victorian Government, in conjunction with the Australian Drug Foundation and VicHealth, is developing an interactive education program which will help parents discuss this issue with their children,” Mr Rogerson added.

Other states, including New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania, have similar laws in place to protect minors from alcohol harms.

For more information about the new law or to request an education pack on the secondary supply of alcohol, which includes guidance for parents to assist with reducing adolescent alcohol use, visit www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/teendrinkinglaw

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