

A community perspective on Australian alcohol guidelines

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"At a party last week the host gave his 13 and 14 year old sons cans of Bourbon and Coke to drink. I was horrified and told him so. My 10 year old was in the bedroom with these kids, so I told him we would have to leave unless the room was an alcohol free zone. I was concerned that children drinking this young are damaged. His attitude was 'I am trying to teach them responsible drinking at home'. I suggested that the legal age might be more appropriate. We argued back and forth." TB, August 2005

“I am very concerned about the amount of underage drinking that is going on. I am in charge of my 15 year old grandson and it seems every party he goes to they are allowed to drink. My two daughters also have teenagers and have the similar trouble. We know that there is nothing we can do as far as banning our teenagers as they have been told by the school that the law says they can drink so long they are in a private place with an adult. With discussions with other parents they have the attitude that if they don’t let them drink they will do it anyway behind their back....” JM Nov 28 2006

“I was less than shocked when I read that police said this was one of the drunkest Schoolies on record. As a Schoolies volunteer this year, I had watched with sadness as parents checked in their children while carrying-in carton after carton of alcohol for them to consume... After all, even though it might be illegal, if your parents are supplying the alcohol, obviously you are expected to drink. It seems that society’s addiction with alcohol has effectively turned parents into drug pushers.”

RL, Courier-Mail 28 Nov 2006 p19.

GUIDELINE 10 - YOUNG PEOPLE UP TO 18 YEARS

10.1 Follow Guideline 9 (for “young adults” aged 18-25)

9.1 “are especially urged not to drink beyond levels in Guideline 1”

1.1 Guideline 1 (for adults): Maximum 28/14 drinks per week;

Av 4/2 per day; Max 6/4 any day; 1 or 2 alcohol free days.

10.2 Should be supported if they choose not to drink

10.3 Should be supervised by adults when drinking

10.4 Keep drinking to a minimum

10.5 “Most importantly” should not become intoxicated

10.6 Gradual supervised introduction to alcohol

ADVICE GIVEN SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

- *Guideline 5.1 advises vulnerable people to “be careful”*
- *Guideline 8.1 advises Older People to drink “less than levels in Guideline 1”*
- *Guideline 11.1 advises that pregnant women “may consider not drinking at all”*

Conclusion re guideline 10 for minors

- *Not specific for underage people*
- *Promotes drinking*
- *Unclear*
- *Unhelpful*
- *Confusing*
- *Inconsistent with other guidelines*