

National Liquor News - December 2008

Why DSICA supports DrinkWise Australia

Most Australians will by now have seen the DrinkWise Australia-funded television commercial that tells parents in no uncertain terms that their children learn how to use or mis-use alcohol from watching their parents.

From the feedback that I have received from parents, the ads are having a great impact. Many parents are saying to me that they now remember to think about their drinking when their children are about, and about what example they are setting for the kids.

DrinkWise has a very good and very simple tagline – ‘Kids absorb your drinking’, which goes to the heart of the issue. It reminds parents what they instinctively know but sometimes forget: your kids pick up on your behaviour and mimic it. So how you use alcohol is how your kids will use alcohol, but with less experience.

The DrinkWise focus for its first campaign is on parents because it has recognised that changing the intoxication culture in Australia will be a long-term effort over many years, and that the under-age drinkers of today – aged 12-17 – have already formed their attitudes towards alcohol and intoxication. Changing those attitudes is very difficult, so it is better to jump ahead and target the children who have not yet ‘learnt’ that alcohol abuse is cool.

A police officer told a newspaper some months ago about how the police can detain underage drinkers and phone their parents to collect them, only to find that all too often the parents are themselves too intoxicated to drive.

As Australia heads into the Christmas and New Year celebrations, many parents will be thinking about how they drink – and how they talk and think about drinking – is going to be repeated by the next generation.

I am hopeful that we can start to see improvements not only in the long term, but also in the short term because more parents will consider themselves as drinking role models.

DSICA was one of the original supporting organisations for the creation of DrinkWise because we, along with other leading industry associations and companies, could see that Australia needed to address its culture of intoxication.

DrinkWise carried out a great deal of research on what influences young drinkers before it started its campaign. That research clearly showed that parents are by far and away the biggest influence on young peoples’ attitude to alcohol. This commitment to having solid evidence of what works and what does not is one of the reasons for DSICA’s continuing support of DrinkWise.

DrinkWise has just appointed Chris Watters as its new Chief Executive Officer. Chris was the Queensland Commissioner for Liquor Licensing, and as such brings a wealth of alcohol related experience to DrinkWise. DSICA looks forward to him continuing the good work that DrinkWise has begun.