

## National Liquor News – September 2014

### Young Australians are ruining alcohol policy for the activists

DSICA keeps an eye out for public opinion surveys on alcohol and drug policies. Truly independent surveys are always very useful pointers about what the public really wants to see in alcohol regulation, and this usually differs from what the anti-alcohol NGOs are telling the politicians the public wants.

Recently the Australian National Council on Drugs released a survey of young peoples' attitudes to alcohol and drug policy. It is great that the ANCD finally asked the people most affected what they thought. In most alcohol policy debates, 'the community' is taken to mean local residents of entertainment precincts, concerned parents of teenagers, the police authorities and the health NGOs. The young, and the wider drinking community, rarely gets asked what they want.

So what did young people want? They want policy frameworks that give them "*freedom to make their own choices*" and they don't generally "*favour regulations that more forcibly moderate the behaviour, (e.g. restricted trading hours and reduced numbers of outlets selling alcohol).*"

*"Over two-thirds of young people opposed increasing the price of alcohol, reducing trading hours for pubs and clubs, reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, and raising the legal drinking age,"* states the ANCD report. So that's what young people want in the way of alcohol regulation. They don't see themselves as victims of the industry, and they want to be in charge of their own decisions.

And how young people - and particularly those underage - are drinking is changing rapidly as well. The Australian government's major survey of Australian drinking is the National Drug Strategy Household Survey, done every three years and including more than 25,000 responses. It is the gold standard of surveys. The last survey's early results (for 2013) were recently released, and show that the rapid decline in rates of underage drinking has continued since 2001. The 2013 survey also showed a substantial decline in risky drinking in 18-24 and 25-29 year-olds, which is a new change that previous surveys hadn't shown.

These two sets of survey results are a credit to Australia's young. They are rejecting untargeted regulation and they are level-headed when using and thinking about alcohol.