

## **National Liquor News July 2013**

### **Sports mixing with alcohol - the other sides we never consider**

The public health movement and WA Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan have been mounting a fairly willing media campaign on alcohol sports sponsorship and advertising over these last months, holding conferences and manifesto announcements. The campaign is possibly in anticipation of the Australian National Preventative Health Agency releasing its review of alcohol advertising in July.

If the public – or more importantly the media - are convinced 'the experts' agree that alcohol advertising near sports is a bad thing, it generates a great deal of pressure on politicians to be seen to take charge and do something. The Police Commissioner has referred to the fact that gambling adverts during sports broadcasts were speedily regulated earlier this year.

The anti argument has two ideas: first, that children see the adverts and get the idea that drinking is normal, and then start drinking earlier. The second argument is that children see their sporting heroes covered with alcohol logos and so associate their stars with alcohol, success and being admired.

The first argument has at its heart the anti groups' belief that so long as drinking is portrayed as being normal through advertising and marketing, they have no chance of convincing Australians that drinking and drinkers should be de-normalised (stigmatised and punished in other words) like smoking and smokers.

The second argument – that sporting stars are associated with alcohol and success – does not stand if you consider for an instant the common news stories about sporting heroes using alcohol.

The media frenzy commonly follows this path: drunkenness, a fight, an assault or drink driving, followed by the police being called, the inquiry, star being dismissed from the club or stood down for several games, and then a very embarrassing and grovelling press conference where the miscreant apologises to his team mates, the club and the fans. Then rehab for the alcohol and other issues.

What lessons would the impressionable young learn from all this? Being drunk and then doing something stupid or criminal has consequences, and that even famous sports stars have to be responsible around alcohol because even they get held accountable.

That's a pretty good lesson.