

## National Liquor News – August 2011

### Way Out West

*Many Australians enjoy alcohol as part of their lifestyle. Some do so in a moderate manner.*

That line is not mine – it's from a West Australian parliamentary committee's report into alcohol. The rest of the report is along similar lines, providing a disapproving and one-sided discussion of alcohol's role in modern society.

In fact, the report draws parallels between 18<sup>th</sup> century London and its squalid Gin Lane with night-time Perth, before trumpeting that *“Almost 300 years later it is again the liquor industry which is flourishing and benefiting from the production and sale of alcohol”*.

A search of the report finds no mention of words such as enjoyment, pleasure or sociable. If the report has anything good to say about alcohol, such as it employs lots of people, it is grudgingly admitted.

The two-year long inquiry produced a very large report that puts the alcohol industry in the dock for West Australia's problems, and specifically for stopping the government from taking any action. The West Australian Hotels Association gets several pages to itself, and its NSW counterpart gets excerpts from newspaper articles about its supposed political influence.

WA's licensing legislation gets attacked for having what is labelled a “pro-industry” purpose: to cater for the requirements of consumers for liquor and related services, with regard to the proper development of the liquor industry, the tourism industry and other hospitality industries in the state. In the word of the report, this simply *“helps ‘line the pockets of the liquor industry”*.

The idea that the consumers of alcohol – the very people that choose to drink and how much to drink – have anything to do with any resulting problems did not weigh heavily on the authors. In reality the alcohol retail industry serves the wishes of the adult population, who make a choice to drink (or not) and how much as they see fit.

The industry could make a fairly common sense point that without their customers' very active support, West Australia's pubs, clubs and bottle stores would quickly shut. The crowds of people in pubs and nightclubs are voting with their feet and their wallets, and well before they start their first drink.