

# **REVIEW OF CHEAP AND PROBLEM LIQUOR PRODUCTS**

MINDFUL OF THE HARM THAT IS CAUSED BY THE READY AVAILABILITY OF HIGH VOLUME CHEAP ALCOHOL PRODUCTS, THE COMMISSION HAS DETERMINED TO SEEK THE VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY ON THE RESTRICTION AND/OR THE REMOVAL OF CHEAP AND PROBLEM LIQUOR PRODUCTS CURRENTLY ON TAKEAWAY SHELVES OF MANY STORES, PUBS AND CLUBS IN DARWIN, PALMERSTON AND RURAL AREAS.

THE COMMISSION HAS PARTICULARLY IDENTIFIED FOUR (4) AND FIVE (5) LITRE WINE CASKS AS PROBLEM OR POTENTIALLY HARMFUL PRODUCTS.

CONSULTATION WILL BE BY WAY OF:

- DISCUSSIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS (TOWN AND CITY COUNCILS, LARRAKIA NATION, AHA, LIQUOR STORES ASSOCIATION, AMITY HOUSE, POLICE AND HEALTH ETC;
- COMMUNITY FORUMS IN DARWIN, PALMERSTON, LITCHFIELD AND COOMALIE;
- INVITATION OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS.

THE CONSULTATION PERIOD WILL EXTEND UNTIL 20 NOVEMBER 2009.

TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE, I DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THE (DISPLAYED) FOUR (4) LITRE WINE CASKS. THEY EACH CONTAIN A TOTAL OF THIRTY (30) STANDARD DRINKS.

THESE WERE PURCHASED YESTERDAY AT A PRICE OF \$12.95 EACH.

FOR A PERSON SEEKING BANG FOR THEIR BUCK, THAT IS 0.43 CENTS PER STANDARD DRINK. THAT COMPARES TO BEER PURCHASED AT A BAR AT \$2 OR \$3 PER STANDARD DRINK OR TAKEAWAY BEER AT A \$1.30 PER STANDARD DRINK, OR SPIRITS AT AROUND \$1.70 TO \$1.80.

UNFORTUNATELY THESE PRODUCTS AND PRODUCTS LIKE THEM HAVE BECOME THE ALCOHOL OF CHOICE FOR MANY PROBLEM DRINKERS.

THIS ISSUE AND THE COMMISSION'S DECISION TO WIDELY CONSULT HAS COME INTO FOCUS DUE TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS:

- TO THEIR CREDIT A NUMBER OF LICENSEES WERE ALREADY PROPOSING OR UNDERTAKING VOLUNTARY MEASURES TO RESTRICT THE SALES OR DISPLAY OF THESE CHEAP PRODUCTS. THESE INCLUDED PROPOSED AGREEMENTS BY LICENSEES IN A NUMBER OF SUBURBS TO RESTRICT THE SALE OR AVAILABILITY OF LARGE CASK WINE. HOWEVER, THE COMMISSION WAS CONCERNED THAT SUCH SUBURBAN BASED INITIATIVES WOULD MOVE PROBLEMS ONTO NEIGHBOURING SUBURBS AND CONSIDERED

A MORE COHERENT OR HOLISTIC APPROACH WAS REQUIRED;

- THE LARRAKIA NATION HAD RECENTLY RELEASED A REPORT ENTITLED *“BEING UNDERSIRABLE: OR, LAW, HEALTH AND LIFE IN DARWIN’S LONG GRASS”*. THIS REPORT DREW ATTENTION TO PROBLEMS LINKED WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF CHEAP HIGH VOLUME CASK WINE AND THE ASSOCIATED ISSUE OF PUBLIC DRINKING;
  
- THE MENZIES SCHOOL OF HEALTH REPORT (AN EVALUATION OF ALICE SPRINGS ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS) RELEASED IN JUNE CONFIRMED THE SUCCESSFUL IMPACT OF RESTRICTING OR BANNING PROBLEM

PRODUCTS IN REDUCING OVERALL ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND RESULTANT HARMS;

- BANDS OF FOUR (4) AND FIVE (5) LITRE CASKS ARE ALREADY IN PLACE IN OTHER TERRITORY CENTRES, ALONG WITH RESTRICTIONS OF OTHER TARGETED PRODUCTS.

FOR THESE REASONS THE COMMISSION IS NOW EMBARKING ON WIDESPREAD CONSULTATION ON THE APPLICATION OF RESTRICTION MEASURES FOR DARWIN AND SURROUNDING AREAS.

EVIDENCE FROM MEASURES NOW APPLYING IN OTHER CENTRES SUCH AS KATHERINE, ALICE SPRINGS AND NHULUNBUY IS THAT IF CHEAP

HIGH VOLUME HARMFUL PRODUCTS ARE WITHDRAWN, THERE IS SUBSTITUTION TO LOWER VOLUME, LESS BANG FOR YOUR BUCK PRODUCTS, INCLUDING BEER AND TWO (2) LITRE CASKS.

OVERALL EVIDENCE IS THAT THIS REDUCES THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL CONSUMED (MEASURED IN PURE ALCOHOL VOLUMES). THIS OBVIOUSLY HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR REDUCED LEVELS OF HARM, IMPROVED HEALTH AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR.

THE ISSUE OF PRODUCT SUBSTITUTION WHEN CHEAPER ALCOHOL OF CHOICE IS NOT AVAILABLE WILL NEED TO BE ADDRESSED.

IF IMPLEMENTED A RESTRICTION ON THE AVAILABILITY OF LARGE WINE CASKS WILL NOT BE A PANACEA FOR ALCOHOL PROBLEMS. BUT A LITTLE INCONVENIENCE TO SOME COULD SEE REAL REDUCTIONS IN EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND ITS HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES.

THE ISSUE OF RESTRICTING HARMFUL PRODUCTS IS NOW OUT THERE – WE BELIEVE AGENCIES IN THE FRONT LINE SUCH AS POLICE AND HEALTH AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS WILL LIKELY SUPPORT RESTRICTIONS ON THE SALE OF THESE PRODUCTS. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THERE WILL BE CONCERN OVER, AND OPPOSITION TO, SUCH MEASURES.

WE NEED WIDE ENGAGEMENT TO GET THE VIEWS OF ALL KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

THAT PROCESS COMMENCES WITH TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

QUESTIONS?