

Yes, we're talking to you



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"Underage" drinking in Australia: The law

The "legal age" in Australia is 18 years

- In NSW:
  - It is illegal to purchase alcohol or to drink in a public place under the age of 18, but it is not illegal to drink on private premises
  - It is not illegal for parents to provide their own children with alcohol
  - It is illegal to provide someone else's children with alcohol unless you have their parent's consent



- There is increasing evidence that:
  - providing teens with alcohol to take to a party or event does not reduce the amount of alcohol they consume
  - allowing children and teens to sip or taste alcohol is associated with early drinking initiation and more harmful drinking patterns
    - » Most parents do not want to provide alcohol to children and teens but feel pressured to do so by their children and by perceptions of what other parents do
    - » The most effective tool we have is to get parents to talk to other parents and support each other in not providing alcohol to teens



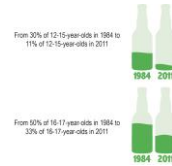
A Watershed moment:

- In Australia, more teenagers are choosing not to drink (White and Barriola, 2012; Livingston, 2014)
- Social movements led by young adults, such as Hello Sunday Morning, have begun to make it acceptable to talk about not drinking.

BUT most teenagers think that the majority of their peers drink, and that if they don't drink they won't fit in

AND

Many parents think that most teens drink, and that parents provide alcohol



Of those teens who reported drinking in 2011:

- 28% said their parents gave them their last drink
- 23% got their alcohol from friends, and 16% from another adult
- The top two places of consumption for those who drank in the last week were parties (33.2%) or their own home (31.0%)



What are parents thinking?



- This study explored knowledge, attitudes and experiences of the supply of alcohol to minor children by their parents.
- The aims were:
  - (a) to investigate whether recent social marketing campaigns successfully reached their intended audience; and
  - (b) inform the development of messages targeted at parents.

FOCUS GROUPS



- 6 focus groups with teens
  - 3 groups 12-14yo
  - 3 groups 15-17yo
- 3 focus groups with parents

ROUND 1: FORMATIVE RESEARCH FOR COMMUNITY INTERVENTION

12-14yo: Parental Supply

- At a 'theoretical' level, expressed the view that 'good' parents don't let their children drink (although the 'bad' parents may be more fun)

... so I don't think that they would let their kids drink because they look like nice people

If you look at 'don'ts' a lot of them look angry or less happy

Most of the parents that wouldn't mind if their kids drink would probably because they're not sober most of the time themselves

- At a personal level, their parents don't let them drink, but do let them 'taste/sip'

My mum knows how much drinking messes you up and she would never ever let me drink because I'm in a family of 8 kids

My mum she teaches my little sister how to drink when she's older...but it's only a little sip and she only has it once a year, a tiny bit

My mum thinks a glass of wine at a family dinner for me, mixed with something else is ok but only at a family dinner which we don't have often

But it was only a tiny bit. They wouldn't let me - a full on drink, like a full on beer but my sister, she's 16, she likes Cruisers already. Do you know what Cruisers are?

15-17yo: Parental Supply

- Varied perceptions as to why parents supply alcohol - some thought this was 'bad' parenting; others saw it as harm minimisation

I reckon Bogan.... Careless

The child dominates the family - has more power

The kid would think they're awesome

I know strict parents that have said if their kid's going out they said we'll allow you to have one or two as long as you just drink what we've given you. So they trust their kid enough to do that

Young parents who are laid back and cool and then they're just 'I'll give you this amount of drinks as long as you promise you're not going have any more, everything will be all right. So you might have a good, nice bond there

They know their kid is going to go out and drink whether they say they can or not so they may as well know what they're doing, know what they're drinking rather than 'behind my back they're going to do this, I'd like to know at least'

- The majority believed that their parents would (or do) allow them to drink
- Clear perception that 'supply' was situation-dependent

I know a friend whose mum is against it but won't stop it from happening. She's 'don't do it, don't do it but once it happens she's like huh' [i.e. dismissive]

Not all the time, but they don't - most parents in my year I don't think care too much anymore just because we're nearly all 18

It depends who you're with, where you're going and how you're getting home


It's a party that your friend at school is holding and you know everyone there - but of you go to a party at Albion Park and don't know anyone, it's just an open house, then they're obviously going to get -

How many people too, that's a factor

I've had situations like on Australia Day and I was with a few people but because the people I was with were obviously 18 and carrying around an esky they didn't want... me to be seen with that. Because it was at a caravan park and they think about image a lot

Parents - Key findings


- General consensus that local kids (esp 16-17yo) are drinking, but not their kids



*It seems to me that at these parties – and you get feedback from parents ... I think the majority of children that go do indulge from what I've heard*

*Having already had a child grow up and listened to the stories over the years – he didn't but what other kids did*

- Parents' views were consistent with those of teens – the primary reason for drinking is fitting in with peers; also raised issues of culture more generally – including 'rite of passage' – and experimenting



*Yeah peer pressure, come back on the Monday and say 'I went out and got blotto on the weekend'*

*Social peer groups, belonging*

*Experimental as well I'm sure initially*

- But 'teaching them to drink' is another story

*I actually think the opposite ...but I've let X try my wine probably since he was about 11 – a sip. Because I'd rather him know what a good wine tastes like and I say to him what can you taste and smell, think about it like proper wine tasting. Because I'd rather him have an appreciation for a good wine than if he tastes rubbish.*

- And parents feel pressured and conflicted

*so I think sometimes some of those discussions, but from a parent perspective to think – my son when he's 16 or 17 drinking, I kind of go 'it's not ok' but the 17, nearly 18 you kind of go...*

FOCUS GROUPS




Adolescents (4 focus groups)  
Parents (3 focus groups)

ROUND 2: MESSAGE TESTING FOR COMMUNITY INTERVENTION

Responses to ads - adolescents

- Strong preference for high-fear advertisements, with participants offering suggestions to make messages 'more effective' for 'those kids'



*This guy looks like he's about to kill himself  
Yeah  
I think this one's the best (A1)*

*I reckon it's good having a colourful thing like that or something really serious, like someone throwing up, something really bad – so people see it and go 'oh crap' I don't want that to happen (A2)*

*And I would put a picture like that, hurt, or being  
Really vivid  
Yeah, like what x said, with death (A4)*

*I like that one, just because it was horrid. I read it and I felt like throwing up. (A4)*

Responses to ads - parents

- Again, perception of underage drinking as a problem for 'other' children in 'other families', was evident in responses to sample campaigns
- Many parents were attracted to high-fear graphic advertising – described as most effective for 'target audience', clearly not themselves or their families



- *With the one with the boy – I'd probably have a bit more vomit down*
- *Something running out of his ear*
- *Blood somewhere*
- *A little bit of blood wouldn't go astray*
- *Is he in prison there?*
- *Yeah*
- *There are no bars*
- *Put a couple of bars or something*

*So that is like the message is right and the message is good – like you say you think you're being responsible, but it doesn't look to graphic. If she had two guys on her – not on her but you know, just make the picture....*

*(I like) the one that scared the living daylights out of you and put the blame on the mother*

**Discussion and Conclusions:**

- Our participants wholeheartedly agreed with the messages (they thought) we were communicating – that supplying alcohol to teenagers is inappropriate.
- In the terms of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, our participants had:
  - the desired ‘attitudes’ (underage ‘drinking’ and ‘supply’ of alcohol is wrong)
  - the desired subjective norms (their friends believe underage ‘drinking’ and ‘supply’ of alcohol is wrong),
  - generally high perceived behavioural control (they could refuse to ‘supply’ alcohol to their teenagers and could ensure that others did not)

However:

- their interpretation of the (un)desired behaviour was fundamentally different to ours and to that of the medical and public health profession.
- they clearly distanced themselves from that message by perceiving their provision of alcohol to their children as a different (and appropriate) behaviour


**Implications for practice**

- Our findings suggest interventions to reduce parental supply will need to address both:
  - misperceptions (such as beliefs that this is an effective harm minimisation strategy); and
  - real conflicts experienced by parents in weighing up the perceived benefits of providing alcohol to their underage children against the risks of adolescent drinking
- Messages targeting parents should emphasise both social norms and the negative health and social consequences of underage drinking



## Questions?

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