

MEDIA STATEMENT



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AUDITOR GENERAL FINDS AGENCIES COULD DO MORE TO COMBAT ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM AT LICENSED PREMISES

In his report tabled in Parliament today, Auditor General Colin Murphy has found the WA Police and the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor (DRGL) could be more effective in monitoring and enforcing key areas of the *Liquor Control Act* in Western Australia.

Mr Murphy said a primary objective of the *Liquor Control Act 1988 (the Act)* is to minimise alcohol-related harm through licensing premises and regulating how they operate. It gives DRGL and WA Police the responsibility and powers to monitor and enforce compliance.

“While monitoring and enforcement of the Act will not, on its own, solve a complex social problem, it is an important part of the solution – but as yet, it is not a fully effective part of the solution,” he said.

“Community expectations have been the major driver of liquor control laws in this state and Government needs to ensure that it is effectively monitoring and enforcing compliance with these laws.”

Mr Murphy found that WA Police and DRGL were not using all the powers available to them through the Act, and that neither agency is effectively monitoring or enforcing the responsible service of alcohol.

“DRGL and WA Police have a shared regulatory role but do not have a clear agreement on how they will collaborate to fulfil that role - this has contributed to gaps in monitoring activity, lack of coordination and poor use of information,” he said.

“The agencies are not working collaboratively to best focus their resources where they would have the most impact.

“Neither agency has comprehensive information on the patterns and causes of incidents in and around licensed premises – information that would allow them to target their activity based on a risk assessment of the premises.”

Mr Murphy said WA Police and DRGL could make greater use of all enforcement mechanisms available under the Act.

“Enforcement options such as the suspension of liquor licenses and the withdrawal of approval from managers are available to WA Police and DRGL through the Act, and yet they have not often been used.

“Enforcement activity, primarily fines, has increased significantly since 2006-07, but over 90 per cent of these have been issued to individuals, with licensees and their staff facing relatively little risk of enforcement for serving or allowing a drunk person on licensed premises.”

Mr Murphy also identified shortfalls in training and education requirements for licensees and their staff.

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"Being sure that licensees and staff are well trained is essential given that licensed venues operate in a setting where excessive drinking, drug use, and anti-social behaviour present complex challenges for staff," Mr Murphy said.

"Not all incidents in and around licensed premises can be attributed to poor management, or to staff serving a drunk person alcohol - patrons are also responsible for how much alcohol they drink.

"Although improvements were occurring during our audit, both regulatory agencies still need to take action to make their monitoring and enforcement of the Act more effective, and they need to work together better.

"Doing so would have benefits for the liquor industry, the people it serves, and the community."

The Auditor General's report, *Raising the bar: Implementing key provisions of the Liquor Control Act in licensed premises*, can be downloaded from the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

ENDS