

NEW MEASURES TO GET TOUGH WITH ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE

30 October 2008

Premier Nathan Rees today unveiled a package of new measures to crack down on anti-social drinking and alcohol-related violence.

Mr Rees said the Government would target known alcohol violence hotspots, introduce a freeze on new twenty-four hour licenses and force anti-social drinkers to take responsibility for their behaviour.

“Alcohol related assaults are one of the few categories of crime on the increase and we know that historically, these incidents tend to increase over the summer,” Mr Rees said.

“We also know that these episodes primarily occur late at night in and around certain licensed venues and drinking precincts.

“Our new measures are not targeted at drinkers who do the right thing or venues that are currently providing a safe drinking environment.”

Mr Rees said the Police Commissioner had provided him with a list of problem venues across the state, which is based on information supplied by BOCSAR, known to be the source of much alcohol related violence.

“From December 1, new standard licensing conditions will apply to these venues, including:

- Mandatory 2am lock-outs (with the exception of existing members wishing to enter registered clubs);
- Cessation of alcohol service 30 minutes before closing time;
- Plastic or polycarbonate glasses for beer service after midnight;
- No shots and drink purchase limits after midnight; and
- Ten minute alcohol sale time-outs every hour after midnight.

“We’ll also review security arrangements in each of these venues and work with them to provide extra security, drink marshals, security at nearby taxi ranks and additional transport options.

“To complement this work, the Government will provide targeted and high visibility policing in alcohol violence hot-spots and conduct a targeted advertising campaign in high-risk venues”.

Mr Rees said the 2am lock-out could also apply to neighbouring premises in certain high-density drinking spots, like the Sydney CBD.

“Additional venues may be added to the 2am lockout if Police observe that a local ‘spillover’ effect is occurring”, he said.

Mr Rees said a high level implementation team would oversee the new arrangements and advise the Government where and when changes needed to be made.

“If new problems arise over the summer, then we can add to these conditions or apply them to new venues”, he said.

The Premier said that over coming months, the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing would work with the liquor industry to replace these targeted conditions with a state-wide graduated sanctions scheme for licensed venues where violent incidents occur.

“A graduated scheme could start with mandatory conditions like lock-outs for first-time incidents, going right up to license revocation for repeat occurrences”, Mr Rees said.

“We will also develop a safety star rating system that rewards safe practices and good records”.

Mr Rees also said the Government would introduce legislation to implement a freeze on all new twenty-four hour licenses.

“New licensees will be limited to eighteen hour trading and existing licensees will have their conditions reviewed to improve safety at twenty-four hour venues.”

Mr Rees said the Government would also provide police statistics that link violent criminal incidents to licensed venues to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research so they can be made publicly available.

“Licensed premises and the Government both have roles to play in dealing with this problem, but so do the idiots who engage in this reckless behaviour”, he said.

“That’s why I’ll introduce into Parliament new laws to deal with minors who use fake IDs and give police new alcohol ‘tip-out’ powers in Alcohol Free Zones.”

Mr Rees said the NSW Sentencing Council, chaired by Justice James Woods, would also undertake a review of sentencing related to alcohol violence and provide advice to the Government on whether changes are needed to deal with glassing.