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AlCrime Reduction Matters

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Integrated approaches to alcohol-related antisocial behaviour and violence

A roundtable was recently held in Victoria to develop strategies to curb antisocial behaviour, with a focus on violence and public safety—particularly alcohol-related incidents. Attendees included academics, police, health professionals, representatives from the justice system and the co-founder of a violence prevention initiative.

Several points were raised at the forum, including the effectiveness of current prevention strategies. While there have been several attempts to curb alcohol-related violence through initiatives such as liquor licensing accords, late-night curfews and responsible alcohol service programs, as at December 2008 there was little consistent evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of these measures in reducing violence in the long term. The experts agreed there is a need for holistic, whole-of-government approaches to develop a more integrated strategy and find the balance between economic and health objectives, and between formal regulation, informal agreements and community mobilisation (Eckersley & Reeder 2008).

The forum identified a range of recommendations that were summarised under seven policy areas:

- *business regulation*—stronger regulation of licensed premises alongside better education for venue staff, not just in responsible service of alcohol, but in handling and preventing aggression. In accordance with situational crime prevention theories, improvements should also be made to environmental design, such as improved lighting and CCTV
- *law enforcement*—increased randomised policing of premises alongside targeted policing of venues identified as problematic
- *medical services*—improved responses by, and communications between, police, ambulance and hospitals. The ways in which hospitals respond to people presenting with aggressive behaviour needs to be managed more effectively and strategically
- *the judicial system*—the development of a peer court to allow young people to be involved in the court process should be considered
- *education*—introduction of school programs which are targeted at enhancing the social and emotional wellbeing of all students. These include conflict management skills, developing empathy and managing students own emotional needs
- *technology and media*—recognition of the role and contribution of the media and communications technologies in antisocial behaviour (including violence) and greater regulation to minimise adverse effects. There is also an opportunity for the increased use of media-based, public-education campaigns to address issues of violence
- *community and culture*—encourage local communities, as well as young people, to become more involved in crime prevention.

The roundtable also concluded that further research is required to develop a better understanding of what works to prevent and reduce violence in and around licensed premises. Efforts should also be made to take advantage of collaborations between stakeholders such as police, hospitals and venues to develop more effective policies.

References

Eckersley R & Reeder L 2008. Violence in public places: explanations and solutions. *A report on an expert roundtable for Victoria police*, December 2008, Australia: 21