

Report of Seminar organised by The Victorian Safe Communities Network and the City of Stonnington, held in the Malvern Town Hall, on Monday 22nd February.

“Fatal Attraction: Young People and Alcohol”

The Seminar was well-attended with representatives from many municipal Councils, the police and organisations concerned with health and alcohol problems

The 3 main speakers were Geoff Munro from ADF, Warren Roberts from City of Stonnington, and Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg.

Geoff Munro:

- Adults are the main problem. They influence young people's behaviour by e.g. demanding the right to be able to buy and consume alcohol anywhere 24/7, even in theatres, hair-dressers, etc.
- Changes to liquor licensing are needed to rein in the number of licenses. The ADF website has help for those wanting to object to liquor licenses. At present there is no provision in the Victorian Liquor Act for objections on the basis that an area is already “saturated” with outlets. The criterion is “competition”. If more outlets want to open you can't stop them competing. This is why VCAT overturns objections from local Councils.
- ADF is working with local government to reduce alcohol-related harm in ways similar to their “Good Sports Program”.

Warren Roberts – Stonnington Council spoke about Council's initiative to reduce binge drinking by a collaborative program with owners of nightclubs and liquor outlets and the police which has some success. They have done research to show that Chappel Street has reached saturation point.

Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg

- **Let's focus on the positives rather than the negatives** -
 - 2/3 of young people don't drink
 - 70 – 80% of young people are happy and well (few are depressed and suicidal)
 - % of 18 – 24 year-olds injured on our roads has never been lower. Inexperience is an important factor in accidents.
 - 80% of 18 – 24 year-olds don't binge drink.
- He emphasised the **immaturity of the adolescent brain** – not mature till 23 in girls and 27 in boys and their inability to predict the consequences of their actions. He said the argument for raising the drinking age to 21 has never been stronger.
- **Get rid of alcohol advertising.** \$1 per day is spent on it. (Lobby Fed. Govt.)
- If you have laws and norm that are not favourable to alcohol use you can reduce consumption in a similar way to what happened with cigarettes. The community and local government need to be on-side.
- **Secondary Supply Law** (Qld., NSW and Tas. Have introduced this and in NSW police are busy handing out \$600 fines to parents who supply liquor to under-age youth without their parents' (Written?) permission. **We should be lobbying our Victorian MPs about this.**

Some other ideas:

- Focus on positives when talking to young people. MIND Australia has a Young Ambassadors of Hope Program. (This is the sort of thing we want to do.)
- **With State and Federal elections coming up this year it is a good time to be pressuring MPs.**