

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES FOR ALCOHOL AND
ILLCIT DRUG PROBLEMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2010**

SESSION ONE

Members

**Dr J.M. Woollard (Chairman)
Mr P. Abetz (Deputy Chairman)
Ms L.L. Baker
Mr P.B. Watson
Mr I.C. Blayney**

Hearing commenced at 9.04 am.**WALDRON, MR TERRENCE KEITH****Minister for Racing and Gaming,****Parliament of Western Australia,****examined:**

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into the adequacy and appropriateness of prevention and treatment services for alcohol and illicit drug problems in Western Australia. You have been provided with the committee's specific terms of reference. At this stage I would like to introduce myself and the other members of the committee present. I am Peter Abetz, the Deputy Chairman; Peter Watson, MLA, member for Albany; Ian Blayney, MLA, member for Geraldton; and Lisa Baker, who we think will be coming; and our research officer Dr David Worth, and from Hansard we have Helen. The Education and Health Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of WA and this hearing is a formal procedure of Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. This is a public hearing and Hansard will make a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record.

Before we proceed to your submission and questions that we have for you today, I need to ask you several questions. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes; I have.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I do.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form today?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would you please state your full name and the capacity in which you appear before the committee today?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: My full name is Terrence Keith Waldron and I appear before the committee as the Minister for Racing and Gaming and because I am the minister responsible for liquor licensing.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Did want to make a few opening comments, before we ask questions?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I will make a couple of opening comments. I am happy to be here and I understand the letter requesting me to be here outlined two issues—first, what we are doing in the

north west in particular, in relation to the section 175 restrictions that ban alcohol in remote communities without a licensed outlet. Those bans are usually made on request from the community; however, we did impose a ban at Oombulgurri because of a coroner's report. I think those bans are working very well and I am happy to discuss them further. Second, the speech in which I expressed some concerns about liquor advertising and promotion in sport. In that speech, I raised some issues and mentioned the need to be careful about how we go about that. I am very cognisant of and recognise the problems with alcohol in the sporting industry, but I am also very, very much aware of how the sporting network can help us overcome some of those issues, and that is maybe what I will expand on today.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I think that is all I would like to say other than that I think alcohol is a part of our community and lots of issues come with that. It is about trying to continue to be smart about how we address those issues—to the best of everyone's ability.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Do you believe the social impact of alcohol has become worse over the past 10 years? How would you assess that?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It has probably changed. I think the impact has probably changed. I think that we have always had issues in the community with alcohol as long as I have been on this planet. Our population has grown. Perhaps, there is an issue about some of the types of drinks that young people in particular consume and the rate at which they consume them. However, I think we also have to acknowledge that since the European population landed here in 1788, alcohol has been a part of the community. Therefore, I think we have to look at ways to try to work with that, and that is what I am trying to do.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Minister, we have heard people from Healthway saying that we should not have any alcohol sponsorship of sport. I am a little concerned about that because in regional towns the hotel is the only place in town that is a community centre and it sponsors safe or responsible drinking. Healthway wants to take away funding from sports that have alcohol-based sponsorship. What is your opinion on that?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: If I can, I would like to say a bit about this, because it was the basis of my speech and it is not only Healthway, but other groups, calling for this. I have been involved with sporting clubs all my life. I want to say that over the years I have probably been accused of being a bit too sport focused, but the longer I live and the more I work in the industry, the more I am convinced of the great benefits that sport has to offer. Many of the social problems, alcohol being only one, and justice problems cannot be fixed by sport, but sport certainly has a very important role to play. I do not think that we have utilised sport and recreation to the best over the years. I am not knocking anyone; I think that everyone tries to do their best, but I think that we can go further.

We sometimes tend to forget that in sport and recreation we have the greatest network across the state. There are some 800 netball clubs; there are hundreds of football clubs, hockey clubs and basketball clubs, and a lot of those clubs cater for the very groups that have issues with alcohol. History tells me that young people, not just young people but people my age and older, involved in sport enjoy having a drink. But it has to be about drinking responsibly and about the clubs managing alcohol and taking responsibility. When I was managing country football, we entered into a program with the Road Safety Council to try to get country people to wear seatbelts. We were losing far too many of our young people simply because they would not put on a seatbelt. We used the football network in Western Australia, of which there is 23 leagues and around about 155 country football clubs from Kununurra to Wyndham and Esperance, and remote Aboriginal communities right throughout the state. That program, which has been running now for—I am not sure—15 years or so, has, I think, been really, really successful. It is hard to measure. However, having lived in the country and having been involved in sporting clubs in the country, I saw it working firsthand. I was involved and it has helped shape my thinking, because I suddenly saw this

huge network that we use to deliver this great benefit. Guys will have a beer at the hotel after a game of football or hockey—or it might be after the local repertory show; it does not have to be after sport. As a result of that program, I saw the message getting through, particularly to the young girls. The young girls would make sure that the guys did not drive and that they put on their seatbelts. It actually gets the message through.

My point about what the member for Albany raised is: do not stop sponsorship through alcohol companies—change it. Do not stop it—change the message. Use that network to promote and to deliver the messages about responsible service and responsible consumption. I think that we all want that, even those people who say that we should ban it all. I understand why they say that—it is because they want an outcome. I have a fear. The member mentioned local hotels. In some of our country towns, the local hotel is the sporting club and is the hub of the community. The hotels support local sport—all sports, including netball. People will drink. My idea is to involve the football and other clubs in the education process.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: When you say, “Don’t stop it, but change it”, what do you change it from and to?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Today, the best player in the football team gets two cartons of Swan Export. For a start, we should not have that. The alcohol companies should be able to support the club, but the club carries all the messages about safe alcohol service, safe alcohol management and safe alcohol consumption. The club, through its president and its committee must continue to pump that message. I will give you an example from my hometown of Kojonup and an event I recently attended. The Kojonup sporting complex, as the member for Albany knows, has a licensed area. The toilets are located downstairs—although that is now going to be changed—and for years everyone would walk down the stairs with their can of drink et cetera. They were actually breaking the law, but everyone had been doing that for years. Now, there are big signs saying they cannot take alcohol downstairs. Now, before presentations and as the president welcomes the side, people are told about the rules and that they cannot take drinks downstairs. If we are to continue sponsorship involvement, we can continue to expand on that message.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Minister, how would you cope with the fact that, if we pursue the direction that you have suggested, you will still have an absolutely insurmountable amount of alcohol advertising happening on television, on radio, on billboards and on the internet and everywhere else. Through life, every child sees a very different message; that is, how incredibly, groovy, funky, cool and hip it is to get absolutely blotto and hang with your mates. You have two very different messages that you are trying to promote—not you personally—so how do you reconcile those two things? How effective do you think your strategy will be?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I think the overall advertising is different to the local sponsorship and what that sponsorship delivers.

Ms L.L. BAKER: But they still coexist.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes; that is so, but I cannot control what happens in alcohol advertising at the national level. However, I am saying that that is going to be there in some form or another; that is, unless there is a total national ban, it will be there in some form or another. I am saying that we need to utilise what we have to promote the safe message. For instance, if there were no sponsorships et cetera on a national or state or sport basis, I worry that the local hotel will support in other ways and that alcohol will get to those clubs in other ways and there will be no rules. People will drink because it is part of our lifestyle. You will defeat the very thing that you are trying to stop, because people will make their own rules.

[11.16 am]

I think that we have got this network where we can—I am the first to admit that it will not be perfect and it will need ongoing management and reinforcement. The other thing we need to

remember is that we are talking about the health of communities and the health of people. The one thing that sport delivers—not just sport but community groups generally; but sport in particular in a lot of cases—is very, very real physical and mental health benefits. Through my department we are promoting this stuff all the time. There are also the justice benefits through sport that give young people who are a bit on the edge something to belong to. The other benefit of sport is the volunteers. People generally, not just parliamentarians, like to talk about the value of volunteers. One of the things I think we are getting better at, which we have not been good at, is actually supporting those volunteers. Some of the funding that comes through the alcohol and other companies makes it possible for those volunteers to keep doing what they do. If we end up cutting all the funding, it gets too hard, people throw up their hands, and that is when the baby goes out with the bathwater, because then you do not have the sports, you do not have the involvement and you have no control over what you deliver. That is my point.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is different in country areas because we rely entirely on volunteers, whereas in the city everyone gets paid.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Even in the city, member for Albany, I have seen through my involvement with the Willetton sports club, which I have been heavily involved in, that the involvement of volunteers is so important. I will just stress one point that I should have made at the start. I am talking about senior sport. In no way do I support alcohol involvement in junior sport, and I want to make that clear, because I do not think that there is a place for it there. When people are 18, they can fight and die for their country; they are allowed to legally drink. I concentrate on that area. I do not think that there is any place for it in junior sport. Once again, however, I think we can assist our junior clubs through our senior clubs in education for kids before they get there. I can remember a time when you would see underage people at country sporting venues having a few cans. You very rarely see that now, and that is what we risk throwing out with the bathwater.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Minister, some interesting statistics that we have been provided with indicate that the direct health cost in Western Australia from alcohol is about \$1.5 billion and an indirect social cost of about \$3.6 billion. Those are pretty massive costs, and one would assume the amount of sponsorship that alcohol companies put into sport and into the community generally would certainly be less than \$3.6 billion, which is the indirect cost. Do you see any place for restricting alcohol sponsorship and advertising—you mentioned that it is not done for juniors—for example, in regional areas, allowing the local hotel to be a sponsor of a footy club or whatever, but to really scale it back in the city? In France, they have banned all alcohol advertising since 1992. I was just wondering what your thoughts are on that.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I think there should be changes to how alcohol is advertised. There is obviously a commercial situation there that I am not going to comment on. As far as sponsorship and support of sporting clubs goes, I think alcohol companies should be able to support sporting clubs and we should utilise that. My argument is, “Let’s use it to benefit the club.” There may be restrictions about what they can do in sponsorship, and if an alcohol company wanted to walk away from that, then that would be their decision. It is a great opportunity for their industry to show some responsibility as corporate citizens and to utilise sport to promote the safe management and consumption of alcohol. I see it as changing the message, not throwing it out, because I think if you throw it out, we lose that opportunity. I see it as an opportunity. I am in my late 50s. I recently went to a function where there were a lot of people who probably thought that we should ban alcohol advertising, and they talked to me about that while we all consumed alcohol. They were drinking responsibly; I have no problem with that. We can use the network that we have to try and help those who do not drink responsibly. I personally feel that that is an opportunity for us, and that is why I made the speech.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What about Skyworks? The Premier has come out and said that that everyone should have designated drinking areas for Skyworks.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: We are working through that. I do not want to comment on that at the moment. I think Skyworks is separate from the sporting side of things, and that is a decision that government will make.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is an alcohol issue.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, it is, and you want to make sure that —

Mr P.B. WATSON: I would just like you to make a comment on it!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: We want to see people to be able to enjoy themselves in safety. It is a little bit like when we get onto talking about the communities up north. It is very much about family safety in their community. Safety at venues and sporting clubs is another thing.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The sorts of changes in advertising that you are suggesting would be messages from the alcohol companies, say, with the Fosters or Swan Brewery logo saying, “Limit yourself to two standard drinks”, or “Fosters says: don’t drink while you’re pregnant”, that type of message? Is that the sort of thing you are suggesting?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, and very much the message about drinking responsibly, knowing the drinks and what is in the drinks, as well as education to the clubs. You see, in sporting clubs you have people who are very much looked up to, people who in communities have influence. Mum and dad can be an influence. I have four daughters—two in their 30s now, one in her 20s and one still a teenager. I have lived through this with daughters. As good a parent as we all try to be, sometimes kids will listen to mum and dad, but if Peter Watson, the Olympic runner, who is involved in a football club, says, “Listen, you boys; what you’re doing is out of order. These are our rules”, and talks to the kids, sometimes that person will get through because they are respected in the community and the kids will listen. I think we greatly underestimate our young people. Sure, at times we get a certain element that cause real problems. We have always had that element, and there are probably more of them because our population is bigger and we have more opportunity probably than we did before. But they were there in my day. Ninety-seven per cent of our young people generally will drink responsibly. They might all have the odd night when they go too far, and that is an issue, and that is where the education comes in, where we can help them. If we are training people in our sporting clubs, and through the funding that we get through the sponsorship we can put funding aside—that may be part of the sponsorship—to ensure that happens, local people will deliver exactly the outcome that I think most people want.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Minister, is that argument not the same as saying, “Let’s support poker machines and then have money spent on rehabilitating chronic gambling”? Is that not the same argument?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, I do not think it is, and I will tell you why I do not think it is. While gambling is part of the Australian psyche et cetera, we have plenty of gambling opportunities. We have a destination gambling situation in Western Australia with the casino; I fully support that we have that casino. Poker machines will certainly never be on my agenda or this government’s agenda. There are other forms of gambling. We have the TAB and racing. People can, as part of the way of life in Australia, still have a gamble. Alcohol is across the community; it is there. We do not have destination alcohol, if you like. Therefore, it is different. I understand the point that you are making. It is a fair point, but I think in Western Australia, successive governments, and I congratulate previous governments, have addressed that by having the destination gambling at the casino, and that is definitely the way to go.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: How about the WACA or Subi oval? You walk in there and there is one banner with one brewery company’s name on it. How dangerous do you think that is?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I guess that is debatable. The things that we are doing at our major venues—selling only mid-strength beer, I think, is a good move. Maybe there could be, as part of sponsorships, things like that. I do not want to discuss individual sponsorships.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Six bucks fifty for a cup that size!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Whether you pay or you do not is your choice! One of the issues in legislation coming before the Parliament is giving some legal status to banning bringing alcohol into the ground. At the moment it can be stopped, but there is nothing legal. We are putting that in place as well, which is important for the sports.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Minister, we have just come back from the Kimberley. We went to Fitzroy. We looked at some of the situations there, and I applaud you for the stance you have taken. The main concerns we had up there is that it has gone into the communities, but there are no support services there.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes. Can I comment on that?

Mr P.B. WATSON: Sure. That is why I asked you!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I just want to comment first that with what we are doing in the Kimberley, I want to make sure you understand that where there are licensed premises, the Director of Liquor Licensing is the only person who can impose restrictions. Where there are no licensed facilities, they can apply to me. In certain cases I can enforce it—for example, Oombulgurri. I am very proud of what we are doing there and I think it is good, but it is not the be-all and end-all. I think the whole problem is linked to a number of things. One of those is support services. There are quite a lot of support services up there; the support services are spread across government. Those support services do not actually come under me.

Mr P.B. WATSON: When we were at Wyndham, apparently there were more support services in Oombulgurri than there were people, because everyone had come into town for the liquor.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Because the support services come across other portfolios. I continually meet with those portfolios and encourage them. I think we have to be really smart, because whichever government is in power, everyone wants more services and everyone will do their best, but at times you cannot always do as much as you would like to do. We need to make sure that we are targeting them where they are needed. One of the points is that if these continue to be successful, as they are—I would like to just talk a little bit more about that—the need for a lot of those support services will not be as great and they will not be as spread, because if we get those hundreds of communities without a lot of the issues that they currently have, some of those services will not be in as much demand. That is going to be a longer term thing; in the meantime we must try to do whatever we can to support those services. Through sport and recreation and Garnduwa and where I am responsible, I will try to do that to the best of my ability, and continue to urge other parts of government to make sure that we do that to the best of our ability.

Can I just say that with the banning of alcohol in these communities, it gets thrown at me, “Oh yeah, but people just move to where the grog is.” There is a certain amount of truth in that. People do move, particularly those who are, unfortunately, fairly hardcore alcoholics or drinkers. An alcoholic will try to get alcohol. But what we are finding in these communities is that while some people will move, there are quite a few in the community who are sort of on the edge, who do not move. Then, with the actual banning in place, they are the ones whom we are turning around. As I said before, this is not perfect; this alone will not fix the problem, like sport will not fix the problem. It is a part, but it is a very important part, because it gives the community a circuit-breaker, a chance to reassess, and it makes the women and children, in their houses, one hell of a lot safer.

If you can bear with me, I will tell just one little story. The key to this is consultation, and I do not do this without travelling to the community. I talk to the community about what it means if they are going to do this, and we do not always grant them. I only agree to this if I know that the community is in support, has very strong leadership, and is going to want to make this work.

[9.30 am]

I have got to tell you what I have noticed, and this is a personal thing I have. I address the community and as I am talking to them I am watching and, you know, you pick up how people are thinking. Quite often I will be there and there is a group in front of me and I will see a lot of the women there, as I am talking about it, nodding their heads. You can tell they want this to happen. In the middle there are probably people my age and down to the mid to late 20s who are not so sure; and some of them do not make eye contact and kick the ground a bit. They are not so sure about this. But the really encouraging thing to me, and it is something that is really inspiring me to keep trying to do this in a responsible manner, is the young guys. Because the young guys are saying to me—and saying to John Nichols at the back here today who comes with me on a lot of these things—“We want this” because they do not want to get caught in it. They actually want to go and play footy; play basketball. They want to be a David Wirrpanda or they want to be successful and get an opportunity in life, and they do not want to get caught up in it, and that is the encouraging thing. My hope is that at the end of the day Tuck Waldron, or whoever is minister or whoever is in government, actually cannot do it. It is the communities that have got to do it. What I am trying to do is help them drive their community; and maybe it is in 50 years’ time, or hopefully it is 20 years’ time, when those young guys are the elders and the problem is greatly lessened because of their leadership. Maybe that is rosy thinking, but while I am in this position I am going to keep having a crack at it.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There are 10 communities with liquor restrictions in place at the moment, most of them in the Kimberley.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any plans to expand to other parts of the state where there are significant alcohol issues in communities; or not?

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Northbridge.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes. I think we have around—John will correct me—at least five or six other communities that we are looking at at the moment. I know of three or four who have come to us at the moment. This happens when the community itself drives it and comes to me with a request. When that happens, we consult with the police, with health, with the Drug and Alcohol Office, with the local council and very much with the community and the community leaders; not just the leaders, and that is why I go out to the communities. So, they all have input. We have had instances where we have not granted them. I will not mention the places because when I say we have not granted them, we are still working with them to get to a situation where they might be in a position to do it. But it is no good us agreeing to a ban when you know damned well that the leadership of the community is not there or there is no real appetite for it. I want the ones we are doing to be successful, because what we are seeing happening is the Aboriginal people in those communities, the leadership and the young people, are seeing what is happening in other communities and they want that to happen. So the moment we just go willy-nilly and it is not working, I think I defeat my purpose.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Minister, when we were in Wyndham I spoke to two young people both in full-time jobs and both not on alcohol and drugs and I said, “What do you think about this.” They said, “It’s great but when are you going to do it down south?” They say, “We read about all these things that happen in Northbridge. Why are you picking on us? Why isn’t it the same for them as it is for us?”

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I cannot speak for the Director of Liquor Licensing —

Mr P.B. WATSON: No, I am just letting you know that comment and that it was two young well-educated kids who had done the right thing. Members of their family were on the grog and the drugs and they got off—did not even get on it. But these articulate young Indigenous people were saying, “Yes, we’re doing it here. Why aren’t you doing it down there?”

Mr T.K. WALDRON: There are other areas that have restrictions across the Goldfields et cetera.

Mr P.B. WATSON: No, they are talking about in Perth.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: All right. We have had some restrictions in Northbridge et cetera, as you have seen. One of the things I want to say is that I want to try to focus on the people who cause the trouble because what you are saying—and I understand the argument and there is a lot of reality to it—is that in some cases restrictions do affect the whole community when the whole community is not causing the problems.

Mr P.B. WATSON: We are going to Northbridge one night between 12 and three, so we will see how bad they are!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The bill that is in the Parliament now, member, is on the barring notices which gives an opportunity there. I do not want to go into it today because we will debate that in the Parliament, but that is one of the tools that I want to bring in across the state to try to focus on the people who are actually causing all this trouble so that we do not have to take those other measures.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before I pass to Lisa, I want to clarify the earlier question about any plan to expand the bans. Are there communities—you do not need to name them—in the Goldfields and the Pilbara as well, or are you looking at Aboriginals purely in the Kimberley?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, we are dealing with communities in the Pilbara at the moment and the Kimberley. There may be others that have not got to me yet, but if a community is out in the western desert or wherever it is, remembering that I only deal with the ones where there are not licences, so, if you are talking about a community where there is a pub, then that goes to the Director of Liquor Licensing.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Minister, I just take you back to your discussion at the beginning of this about alcohol bans and communities. Can you explain to me the logic around what you described when you said that it is okay to ban alcohol in communities to get the young people on the right track and to get them involved in football, hockey, basketball and healthy things; yet when they go there they walk straight into “Sponsored by Carlton Draught” or “Sponsored by Jack Daniels” or someone else like that. So, you have got one set of messages going on in the community that are encouraging them into healthy pursuits whereas yet again they slap head on into the advertising of what is a legal drug.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It is a good point, but my answer to that point is that—and remember we are talking about isolated communities—when those people leave those communities and go to the bigger towns, they are going to be exposed to that. My background is in football and cricket but also the work that I did with Garnduwa and the Aboriginal sports development corporation across the Kimberley. I just say that when I go to Aboriginal communities, the things that drive them are family, their culture, their arts and their sport, and I am trying to link very much closer with arts and culture, because I think we deliver the same outcomes. My argument is that they are going to be exposed to that—you are right—and that is why I want to change the message with the alcohol sponsorship in sporting clubs so that when they go from that community, they get the responsible message. They actually get that message reinforced when they are exposed to that alcohol; because if we do not, they will go to those places anyway. They will continue to play sport, and I want to encourage them to do that until the day I die, but they will go to those places and it could well be open slather. That is my point, and it is a really good point you raised, because otherwise we are being inconsistent.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Just one thing about this alcohol in country towns: they donate trophies, and not alcohol.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I did not think it was.

Mr P.B. WATSON: No. But I am just saying there is a perception that just because it is a hotel that is sponsoring something, that they are giving grog. A lot of the time it is money, trophies and things like that.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Member for Albany, you are right, but it did not used to be like that. There were times, and I can remember that we had sponsorship when I played football in the country —

Mr P.B. WATSON: That was a long time ago!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It was a long time ago, member—but the best player got the mug and you got free grog all night. My point is that if we do not continue to support and sell the message, we will go back to that, because that will be the only option for what they can do. That is my concern.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Can I just ask you about Garnduwa?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes.

Mr P.B. WATSON: They get a lot of funding from the federal government.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: And from the state government.

Mr P.B. WATSON: And from the state government. I had mixed messages when we were up north about how effective they are. They concentrate on maybe football too much. What is your opinion on that?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I have worked with Garnduwa a lot over the years. There was a time when I shared some of those concerns. I actually thought when I started to manage country football, the football in the north was not involved. I thought this is crazy and got involved. Garnduwa were very helpful because they had the networks. What I did find at one stage was that Garnduwa had a lot of people out there, but I actually questioned—I am going back to the mid-1990s, member—the effectiveness of what they were doing. I actually met with Garnduwa and Alan Bishop, the CEO who you might have met. I think they have improved greatly. I will say that probably at times their delivery could be questioned sometimes. However, you have got to remember that trying to deliver sports development across the Kimberley, the desert countries and all those isolated communities is sometimes very hard to make sure everything happens like clockwork at times. So, it is an issue there, and the way of life up there in the Aboriginal communities sometimes makes that difficult. However, if Garnduwa were not there, it is a bit like when you go to a field day, member: people say, “What’s the value of going to a field day?” It is very hard to measure, but if you are not there, you have got no value. I think we should always challenge Garnduwa. The Department of Sport and Recreation, my department, works with Garnduwa and Sport and Recreation and I have just allocated a lot more money to the western desert and the lands areas. We now have two sports officers working out there in the sporting side of things with private investment helping, which is a great partnership. Yes, it is a good point you make. I think Sport and Rec needs to work closely with Garnduwa to make sure that they are delivering to the best of their ability. In fairness to them, though, they are the ones out there doing it and if they were not, a lot of those places would not have any presence. So, I am happy to talk to you about your concerns later because if there is a particular area, perhaps we could meet with Alan Bishop and talk about that.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Minister, back in May 2009, you did a press release and stated that you were receiving briefings on the progress of the alcohol access card trial in the Northern Territory—if it is not too long ago for you to remember!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, no.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Can you give us a bit of an idea of whether it has been successful or any thoughts on it?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, I can give you an idea. I went back again recently to see firsthand how that card was working. I think people get a bit of a wrong impression of what that card does. The card there is linked to the court system. So, before that card is applied, you do not just say, “Billy’s

drinking too much, we're going to ban him." You actually have to commit an offence. It then goes through the courts. So, there is an alcohol court and that court can then bar you from drinking and your card then shows that you cannot purchase alcohol. It has had a certain amount of success. However, the police—and that is why I go back—are telling us that the secondary supply is a huge issue; that they are still picking up those people who are banned and have gone through that system still having alcoholic problems and causing problems. So, it is certainly a tool that assists. Where it has probably had its greatest benefit is actually in restrictions. For instance, in Alice Springs the restriction on one carton of wine a day, and you can only purchase that after six o'clock. Where the card is very helpful in supporting those restrictions is if Tuck Waldron goes in and buys his carton and then he goes 500 yards up the street to buy a second one, which you are not allowed to do, it will show that you already had the carton for the day. So, that is a benefit.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It does that on the card or do they have a database that they enter it into, a web-based system?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes, that is right, so it shows that. So that is where the benefit is. I think there is a misconception that if an alcohol card comes in, then we do not need any restrictions. It does not work like that because this is linked to the courts. We are just having a report done by my department, the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor, coming back to us to show what the cost is. If we are to do it here, we would have to change a lot of legislation or we might have to look at some other kind of card system. If we did the same as the Northern Territory, it is going to take some time to do that. We have to weigh up exactly what that delivers, as opposed to the cost to the government and the taxpayer. But it is something that we are certainly still looking at closely. I do not want to rush into it. I was speaking to another politician in Kalgoorlie the other day who I think had that misconception that the card would solve the problems, because if Tuck Waldron was causing problems in the Kojonup hotel, we would just give him a card. It does not work like that.

Mr P.B. WATSON: A red card!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes!

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: One of the things that was suggested to us in the Kimberley—I cannot remember who it was now—was the idea that to be able to purchase alcohol, either in a pub or in a takeaway facility, you need to have a licence which records what you purchase and there can be then the enforcement of limitations to what people can buy. And if somebody has a huge problem, it shows up on the database that this person is limited to X amount or whatever might be the case. What are your thoughts on that type of system?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Limiting individual people on different things is fairly difficult, I would have thought, but that is where the Northern Territory card does have a role. But I would need to think more about that and look at how you would apply that. If there would be different restrictions for different people across a big community, I think the barring notices would help that situation.

[9.45 am]

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The AHA is pretty concerned about the fact that people are floating the idea of restrictions on alcohol advertising. Have you had any discussions with the AHA on that issue?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I meet with the AHA quite regularly to discuss issues. It represents the industry and it comes to me and we try to have a relationship, because I need to listen to the industry's needs as well. As far as advertising is concerned, I probably have not talked a lot about that side with the AHA.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you happy to talk about the bill that is before Parliament, or are there some issues with that?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I do not want to go into the detail of the bill, really, because it really is the job of Parliament to decide on that bill. I will say that the bill is there in good faith. Over my last two years as minister, the reality is that we have alcohol harm in our community; there is no doubt about that and I recognise that. What we are trying to do with the bill is a couple of things. One, cut red tape, particularly in the area of requirements on managers and approved managers et cetera, to give flexibility, to give a five-year term and help the industry in that way. We are also trying to actually assist licensees in being able to protect their own premises, themselves and their customers. With the barring notices, we are trying to help the public by making safer venues. Also, young people sometimes make mistakes that most of them regret later. The idea of the barring notice is also about helping the person who actually commits the offence. I will talk about this more in Parliament, but to make a football analogy, a coach might be coaching someone like Barry Hall and will suddenly see that he is getting to a stage where he is going to cause some mayhem. The barring notice is like that—you pull them off, sit them on the bench, give them a little time to think about what could have happened or what did happen, and hopefully make them a better person, both for themselves so they can have a good life and not get themselves into bigger problems that will affect them for the rest of their lives, and also protect the public and the publican.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any further changes planned for the Liquor Control Act?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: No, not at this stage. I think what we have put forward is what we are doing at this stage. I have no doubt that as time goes on, and whoever is in the position, there will always be changes. It is the nature of the industry and the nature of our society. Society keeps changing, and I have to say, I have seen many changes over the years in my lifetime. When I think of what used to happen, my dad and his era, how alcohol applied, we have come a long way. I think we sometimes tend to forget that. We really have come a long way, but that does not mean that we do not still have a way to go. I think it is really good that the committee is looking at this. We need committees like this to examine this closely. In my role I try to be very natural and look at it from a community, everyday living point of view. I am very aware that governments can go over the top with these things, but we also have a responsibility to give some boundaries and ensure that our communities are safe, and that people can actually go out as a family, or a young couple, a guy and his girlfriend, can go somewhere, have a really good time, have a couple of drinks, but do it in safety and have the opportunity to learn that there is a way of doing this, and then I think we will be a better society. We will not solve all the problems; they will always be there, but we all need to try to do our bit.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Some of us were at the Western Australian drug and alcohol symposium that was held in Fremantle the other day. Professor Rob Donovan gave a presentation on alcohol advertising. There is a voluntary code of conduct or standards for alcohol advertising. He showed us a PowerPoint demonstration that clearly demonstrated that an awful lot of alcohol advertising simply does not match the official standard and that nothing is happening. I wondered whether you have any thoughts on that or if that is something you have not become aware of.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I actually look at some of the advertising and I certainly think there could be some changes in the way it is advertised at times. I discussed that with the director and I think it is an Australia-wide issue. It is obviously an issue for the industry and for the federal government as well. I probably need to do some more work in that area, which I will certainly do.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think it is actually a federal code, if I am not mistaken.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Yes. That does not mean we cannot have input into that, and we probably should.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Do we have any powers there?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I would have to get some advice on exactly what our powers are there, but I think we could always, as a state, have some influence and input into that.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: The pricing of alcohol comes up all the time. Do you think we will have a federal government that is prepared to bite the bullet on this and excise on the basis of alcohol content, rather than the current system we have with different rates applying to different products?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I do not know. I do not want to comment, because I am not really sure of what its plans are. These are the kinds of things I can discuss when I meet with other ministers and federal ministers, but I have not really discussed anything on that level, so I would not like to try to guess. It probably has been discussed at department level, but I do not want to comment on it today and give false information, because I am not right across where it is at at the moment.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think it came up in the Henry tax review. He recommended that alcohol be taxed on the alcohol content, and in that way encourage the sale of lower alcohol drinks.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Obviously the new federal government will look at that, and I hope it will talk to us about that. When I am more across it I would be happy to look at the pros and cons, but I do not have an opinion on it at the moment.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would you like to say anything to wrap up?

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Thank you very much for your interest in this. As a committee, no doubt these things will be thrown around. We just need to be realistic in what we do, and I want to reinforce the value of sport in the community. It is not just about running around, kicking the football, throwing the netball or riding the pony over the jump; it is what goes on around that. Playing sport and having volunteers and the people who lead communities and who are made leaders of communities through their involvement in sport and the skills they learn is critical. If we impede that and make it very hard, I honestly believe it will make the problem a heck of a lot worse, and that is why I have said what I have said today, because I really believe that. We need to do it in a very responsible way and I am happy to work with anyone to do that. Thank you, and can I just say to the member for Albany, good luck to Claremont in the grand final!

Mr P.B. WATSON: And Collingwood!

Mr T.K. WALDRON: And Collingwood! Thank you for your questions, they were very good.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days of the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added by these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, you are welcome to do so, but please include it as a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript. Thank you.

Hearing concluded at 9.53 am