# NSW Alcohol inquiry: current law fails to protect youth

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A leading national public health organisation has called on the New South Wales Government to strengthen secondary supply laws to better protect young people from alcohol harms.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) will call for changes to the current NSW Liquor Act 2007 to make it more difficult for young people to access alcohol when it presents today to the NSW Legislative Assembly Social Policy Committee Inquiry into the Provision of Alcohol to Minors.

The call coincides with the release of a NSW study that has found that almost 20 per cent of parents who provide alcohol to children aged 13-17 years, allow it to be consumed without adult supervision.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the current legislation is flawed and ineffective.

“Every week in Australia one teenager dies and another 60 are hospitalised as a result of alcohol related harms. Currently it is all too easy for minors to get alcohol from others, or to purchase it themselves. The Liquor Act has gaps big enough to drive a beer truck through and we need to replace it with robust, effective legislation that better protects young people from harm,” Mr Thorn said.

FARE will recommend the removal of the defence that currently exists for people convicted of selling liquor to minors, as well as the introduction of ‘controlled purchase operations’ that would send a strong message to retailers that those selling alcohol to minors will be caught and penalties will apply.

FARE will also call for the introduction of ‘irresponsible supply’ laws which would ensure that the lawful supply of alcohol to minors must be conducted in a safe and responsible manner, as well as a highly visible public education campaign that clearly informs both supplying adults and minors about the legal consequences of secondary supply laws.

The NSW study funded by FARE and published today shows that parents have little knowledge of guidelines regarding adolescent alcohol consumption, and are unclear of the NSW law relating to secondary supply.

Sources of Alcohol for Underage and Teenage Binge Drinking by the University of Newcastle examined the role of parents in supplying alcohol to 13 to 17 year olds. It found that 70.6 per cent of parents provided alcohol to their children, of which 57.8 per cent was to be consumed under parental supervision.

“Public education is important if we are to strengthen secondary supply laws. We know that many parents still believe that introducing alcohol to young people in their presence is the right thing to do – despite research stating that its best to delay the onset of alcohol consumption as long as people can,” Mr Thorn said.

FARE has recommended a uniform approach to secondary supply laws across all states and territories to avoid confusion.

In addition FARE has called on the Inquiry to explore other factors that contribute to the broader drinking culture.

“If the O’Farrell Government is serious about addressing underage drinking and wishes the people of NSW to believe it is sincere about seriously addressing alcohol harms, then it needs to demonstrate that it is also prepared to tackle the availability, affordability and marketing of alcohol,” Mr Thorn said.

[view the report](https://www.fare.org.au/adolescent-risky-drinking-sources-of-alcohol-and-the-role-of-parents/)

### Metadata