



Hon. George Souris M.P
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing
Minister for the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday 18 September 2011

JOINT OPERATION TARGETS UNDERAGE DRINKERS AND FAKE ID

Teenagers bragging about underage drinking on social media sites have triggered a new crackdown in and around licensed venues in popular beachside towns in the lead up to Schoolies Week.

Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality, Racing and the Arts, George Souris, said the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing (OLGR) and NSW Police have launched the joint operation to stop minors getting into pubs and clubs and accessing alcohol from bottle shops.

“The first leg of the program, Operation Uncover, was held in Newcastle last night (September 17), with a team of 15 OLGR inspectors and licensing and general duties police conducting walk-throughs at eight pubs and clubs sweeping for minors and checking IDs,” Mr Souris said”.

“There appears to be a growing trend where minors are bypassing fake ID for a borrowed ID from a relative or friend if they have a similar appearance, however, the Newcastle operation, which found several under age drinkers, shows that they will get caught.”

Mr Souris said the *Juvenile Drinking Initiative* will target 30 high risk late trading licensed venues to strengthen ID checking procedures and teach staff how to detect a fake or altered ID.

“Over the next three months, this campaign will be rolled out in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle City, Lake Macquarie, Tuggerah Lakes, Brisbane Water and Tweed-Byron Local Area Commands,” Mr Souris said.

“Uniformed OLGR inspectors and police will conduct high visibility inspections of late trading pubs and clubs sweeping for minors on the premises and checking IDs.

“Officers will also be ensuring venue security staff is conducting proper checks at entry points to keep minors out and catch anybody attempting to use a fake ID.

“Licensees who allow underage drinkers on their premises face a maximum penalty of \$11,000 and 12 months in jail.

“The NSW Government also recognises the need to promote individual responsibility and a clear message that a culture that permits underage or excessive consumption is not acceptable.

“If you’re underage and caught unlawfully inside licensed venues or buying alcohol from a licensed venue you can cop a fine of up to \$2,200. And you could even risk spending an additional six months on your P-plates if you use fake ID.”

Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Hunter, Michael Gallacher, said: “This operation delivers a blunt message to minors in the lead up to Schoolies Week – don’t try to get into pubs and clubs or buy alcohol from bottleshops because you will be caught and there are significant penalties.

“It’s also a warning to licensed venues to put extra procedures in place now in preparation for the increased risk during end of school celebrations.

“Supplying alcohol to a minor is a serious crime and can lead to fines of up to \$11,000 and 12 months imprisonment.”

Member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, said: “I have listened to concerns raised by members of the Newcastle community regarding alcohol fuelled violence, underage drinking and the irresponsible serving of alcohol in the city.

“I recognise that there is an issue of irresponsible service of alcohol in Newcastle and I am committed to working with and for the community on the matter and I am sure that the people of Newcastle will appreciate the efforts being made by the NSW Government.

“This is about targeting irresponsible licensees, not those who are playing by the rules”.

Mr Souris said OLGR officers are currently attending liquor accord meetings and staging ***RSA on the Frontline*** workshops to help licensees introduce strategies to reduce the risk of minors getting into their premises.

“Security and door staff are being encouraged to use black light testing devices to verify the authenticity of special security features on IDs such as holograms and highlight any abnormalities if the ID has been altered in any way,” Mr Souris said.

“With a range of internet sites offering bogus IDs such as international student cards, licensees are also being told to only accept a current driver’s licence, passport, a NSW Photo Card or proof of age card issued by another State or Territory.

“Licensed venues are also being encouraged to use the Australian ID Checking Guide – a handy pocket sized booklet containing the various forms of IDs in each State and Territory and a description of their security features. It also gives advice on how to spot a fake or altered ID.”

Media contact: Norm Lipson 0467 734 679