

Sunday 29 November 2009

## **LIQUOR LICENCES AUTOMATICALLY SUSPENDED UNDER DEMERIT POINTS SYSTEM**

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition today launched the liquor licence infringement demerit points scheme, targeting problem venues which continue to disobey liquor licensing laws.

The scheme will see liquor licences automatically suspended when a venue accumulates sufficient demerit points. Demerit points will be incurred for admitted or proven offences relating to the presence and service of drunk or disorderly people and the presence and service of alcohol to minors on licensed premises.

Licensees with demerit point totals that reach one of three suspension trigger levels will receive immediate liquor licence suspensions of 24 hours, 7 days or 28 days. No appeal will be possible.

The demerit point scheme targets problem venues in a direct response to the Brumby Government's failure to properly enforce the current liquor laws which have left the community dangerously exposed.

Under John Brumby's weak approach, those licensed venues that flout the law by selling alcohol irresponsibly simply pay an occasional fine and continue to cause problems, as more severe consequences are rare.

The profits made by irresponsible licensees who sell booze to drunks and minors more than cover the fines – if they are ever caught.

Our demerit points scheme enforces automatic suspension of liquor licences when businesses continue to offend. Clearly, fines alone are an insufficient deterrent in an industry where thousands of dollars can cross a bar in the course of a weekend.

Automatically suspending a liquor licence for up to 28 days will affect a venue's cash flow, reputation and value.

This policy shuts down those businesses that continue to flout the law, while

# Policy

those licensed venue operators that do the right thing and obey the law will be rewarded.

Under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government:

- A driver demerit points-style system will be established to be applicable to liquor licences. As with the driver demerit points system, breaches of the liquor laws carrying sufficient demerit points will result in the immediate suspension of a liquor licence depending on how many points are incurred and over what period of time.
- Relevant offences will carry different numbers of points depending on the seriousness of an admitted or proven offence. So, for example, serving alcohol to a minor would carry more points than serving an intoxicated adult.
- Each licence would have demerit points allocated depending on the class of licence, size of venue and any other relevant risk factors. Points will expire after three years.
- Liquor licences will have any demerit points recorded on a publicly searchable database, ensuring that the community will have access to information about licensed venues in their local area.
- Any licensee, nominee, director or associate applying for a new liquor licence will be required to disclose any past demerit points incurred by a licensed venue with which they were associated at the time of any offences.
- The system would operate in addition to the current penalty system, so any breach or other circumstance currently serious enough to warrant steps to suspend or cancel a liquor licence by VCAT or other authorities would not be affected.
- Consultation will be carried out with the industry and other stakeholders to ensure that the design of the demerit points system is appropriate to different types of licences and venues.

As a community, we have to take a stand against these rogue operators – breaches of liquor licensing laws can directly contribute to anti-social behaviour and violence on our streets.