

Executive Summary

being safe not sorry is a joint Victoria Police/Wellington Central Liquor Accord program, introduced at Sale on 5th September, 2005. This successful and popular program aims to educate the community about responsibility on both sides of the bar: responsibly serving alcohol and responsibly consuming alcohol. Feedback consistently indicates that this type of program is a potentially effective way of educating the community about the dangers of mixing alcohol and driving particularly at the lower, but illegal, blood alcohol concentrations. Alarming 26 to 39 year olds females, a group with several years driving experience who should know better, are increasingly driving with BAC's of 0.05% to 0.10%, after drinking wine. They ignore the fact that the risk of a crash increases many times over. The impairment in skill is also further compounded by the fact that drink drivers are more likely to speed, less likely to wear a seatbelt and less likely to take steps to prevent fatigue.

The 3 hour program provides liquor industry staff with extended training in their Responsible Service of Alcohol. It also provides experiential learning for community groups on the responsible consumption of alcohol and effectively reinforces health, drink driving and other road safety messages.

The program is underpinned by responsibility and all participants are briefed regarding rules and anticipated outcomes with prior risk assessments being undertaken. Participants consume various amounts and types of intoxicating liquor during a meal and provide regular breathalyser samples to measure their changes in blood alcohol levels. Skilled facilitators use games to test reflexes and a quiz to reinforce health messages and drink driving laws.

Liquor industry staff are allocated small groups to monitor behavioural changes and intoxication levels. Importantly this process refines their interpersonal skills when dealing with people who are becoming intoxicated. At no stage is an industry representative permitted to serve a person should they become intoxicated and transport is provided.

being safe not sorry continues to attract significant local media and its expansion is recommended in the 2006 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Incidence and Prevention of Pedestrian Accidents.

The problem

Sale is a rural Victorian town situated approximately 260 kilometres east of Melbourne, in Central Gippsland with a population of nearly 13,000. Sale Police Station is the only 24 hour complex in Wellington and rely on existing resources to patrol during peak enforcement periods. Additional back up can be up to one hour away.

Like other rural communities, Sale has its problems with underage and binge drinking. Licensed venues make money selling drinks and clearly the more drinks they sell, the more money they make. Inexperienced or non-compliant venue operators tend to keep filling up drunks to the point where customers are tipped outside once they aren't drinking and spending anymore. Once outside the person makes their way to the next venue and the same pattern is repeated. As they're already quite intoxicated, they're likely to spend less on drinks and their behaviour will attract attention making them a potentially bad or risky customer.

There are several late night licensed venues in Sale and the Club Hotel is usually the last venue on the circuit. The Club Hotel has high-risk conditions on its licence and can operate to 7.00am. The peak time for people walking between venues is between 12.00 am to 4.00 am and a critical lack of taxis during peak times presents serious risks for pedestrian safety, other amenity problems and potential increased drinking drivers. What many people do not understand, or refuse to admit, is that a person does not need to be drunk for alcohol to affect driving ability.

Whilst actual road trauma and reported crime in the Sale Response Zone has been relatively under control, there is an undercurrent of community concern regarding the behaviour of patrons leaving late night pubs and clubs. Local businesses were also complaining to Wellington Shire Council about vomit and rubbish being left in the amenity.

Sale Police regularly conduct liquor licensing operations throughout Wellington and offending venues are issued with substantial fines for licensing offences such as serving intoxicated people. Clearly there were issues regarding the responsible service of alcohol and the term 'intoxicated person'.

Hospitality staff in Victoria only require a basic RSA accreditation (***NATI course THHBFB09B Provide Responsible Service of Alcohol***) to work in licensed venues. The Australia Drug Foundation (ADF) evaluated the RSA program and recommended specific training for licensees, senior management and bar staff in dealing with difficult patrons, especially those intoxicated or underage and a need for an advanced RSA course for senior staff.

What was happening

The drink driving industry is continually changing and around this time various agencies and organizations were set launch specific campaigns affecting drink drivers. In November 2005, Phase 4 of the TAC *Only a little bit over?* Campaign was introduced showing that you don't have to be drunk to be over the limit and that you can't judge your BAC by how you feel. Based on data from evidential breath tests conducted by police in Victoria, drink driving offenders are:

- predominantly male (85%)
- almost one in three (32%) have had one or more prior convictions for drink driving
- almost one in four (23%) were drinking at hotels prior to being intercepted
- the average BAC level was .09
- blue collar workers (trades persons, labourers) accounted for more than a third of those tested
- the main age groups involved were
 - 25-29 years (18%)
 - 21-24 years (15%)
 - 30-34 years (15%)
 - 35-39 years (12%)
- full strength beer was consumed by almost two out of every three (61%) of those tested.

What the TAC is now trying to achieve through its campaigns is a reduction in "low-level" drink driving. Whilst previous campaigns communicated educational and enforcement messages, this new campaign addresses the effects on one's usual lifestyle of losing a licence through "low-level" drink driving.

The *Only a little bit over? You bloody idiot* campaign is relevant to all people who have a few drinks and then risk getting behind the wheel because they are under the illusion of being in control, or assuming that they will not get caught. Local police intelligence indicated an alarming number of 26 to 39 year olds females, a group with several years driving experience who should know better, were increasingly driving with BAC's of 0.05% to 0.10%, after drinking only small amounts of wine. Many of these people also think that driving "a little bit over" the legal BAC level of .05 is alright.

While the expectation of being caught by the police while drink driving has increased over the past three years, people still continue to take the chance. Other reasons why people drive near or over the .05% limit include:

Reason given for driving near or over .05	%
Just wanted to get home	22
Thought I was okay/under the limit	10
Driving is more convenient	9
I was just a little bit over	8
Only a short distance	8
To go to another place	6
Didn't want to leave the car behind	5
Need the car the next day	4
Unlikely to be caught	3
Wasn't thinking	3
I can drive okay when I'm a little bit over	2
No taxis or public transport available	1
Don't know/no reason	4
Other reasons	15

Source Sweeney Research conducted telephone interviews with a sample of drivers in November/December 2003 during which attitudes to various drink driving issues were explored.

The Victoria Wine Industry was also launching its strategic plan Vintage 2010 setting a \$1.8 billion sales growth target over the next five years. (*media release from the Minister for State and Regional Development, May 24th 2006,*) This significant increase in wine sales will no doubt affect the drink driving as the community is still not acknowledging the impact that wine consumption has on BAC's.

On April 2006, police and the liquor industry received direction on the contentious issue of "intoxication". An amendment of the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 (Vic) included a definition of intoxication for the purposes of the Act. "*... a person is in a state of intoxication if his or her speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is noticeably affected and there are reasonable grounds for believing that this is the result of the consumption of liquor.*"

Timing was right for Sale Police to capitalise on the goodwill garnered amongst an invigorated Wellington Central Liquor Accord. The Accord had a genuine desire to improve relations and make a safer community. With the increased police attention and negative media, most licensees now wanted to work more closely with police towards a common understanding of the definition of "intoxicated person".

The Liquor Accord continued working through complex issues including local needs, personal agendas and research of best practice road safety marketing and education programs. Eventually, a unique program known as **being safe not sorry** was developed. The aim of **being safe not sorry** is to educate the local community about being responsible: being responsible regarding drink driving and being responsible regarding the service of alcohol. The objectives are:

1. To provide licensed premises staff with extended information and training in the area of RSA;
2. To provide a road safety education package targeting drink driving; and
3. To provide community health information.

The 3 hour program combines advanced RSA training for hospitality staff with experiential learning for community groups on the responsible consumption of alcohol, drink driving and other road safety/health messages. Underpinned by responsibility, risk mitigation strategies ensure participants are briefed regarding rules and are safely transported home.

How the program works

Prearranged groups of five Accord staff and around 15 guests attend a licensed venue and participate in a controlled drinking exercise. Licensed premises staff arrive first and participate in a one hour session on extended RSA training (particularly element **THHBFB09B/04 – Assist alcohol affected customers**).

During the evening, participants have a meal and consume various amounts and types of intoxicating liquor in a safe and controlled environment. Participants provide regular breathalyser samples on a Breathometer and BAC changes displayed and discussed at the end of the evening. A wall-mounted Breathometer Model BM-2 is used which is an excellent device installed throughout various licensed venues. Importantly, if a member of the public uses a wall-mounted testing device, it is only an indication of their BAC and the licensed premises cannot be held liable if a driver is later found to be above the legal limit. **(Road Safety Act 1986 S. 84A.)** Together with Community Road Safety Councils of Victoria, local police encourage the promotion of these devices in licensed premises and they are an effective component of **being safe not sorry**.

Skilled facilitator's use games and other resources to test reflexes and a trivia quiz reinforces health messages and drink driving laws. Games such as Play Station 2 and resources such as *Beer Goggles* are excellent tools to educate people how alcohol affects driver performance.

Liquor industry staff are allocated small groups to record drinks consumed and to monitor and record behavioural changes. Importantly this process refines their interpersonal skills when

dealing with people who are becoming intoxicated. At no stage is an industry representative permitted to serve a person should they become intoxicated.

At the end of the evening there is a lively discussion of the results along with important comments in behavioural change from the bar staff. People have lightened up, there is a real sense of fun and enjoyment and everyone wants to learn about their experience. Participants are able to learn how their body metabolises alcohol and gain accurate insights into how different BAC levels feel in their bodies.

Alcohol affects people in many ways. Most importantly, it reduces the ability of the driver to be in full control of a vehicle at all times. Like excessive speeding or being seriously affected by fatigue, alcohol raises the risk of crashing to a very high level, since alcohol:

- reduces the ability to do several tasks at the same time
- makes it harder to concentrate on the task of driving
- slows reaction times especially when something unexpected happens
- increases risk taking due to feeling more confident
- distorts vision and hearing especially at night
- makes simple tasks more difficult
- increases the likelihood of the driver falling asleep at the wheel.

Performance becomes much worse as the BAC increases, for example:

- .02 to .05 BAC - the ability to judge distances and to see or locate moving lights correctly is reduced. The tendency to take risks is increased, and the ability to respond to several stimuli is decreased.
- .05 to .08 BAC - the ability to judge distances is further reduced, reactions are slower, and concentration span is shorter. Drivers are five times more likely to have a crash than before they started drinking.
- .08 to .12 BAC - over confidence sets in, over estimation of one's abilities leads to reckless driving, and peripheral vision and perception of obstacles are impaired. Drivers are ten times more likely to have a crash.

In addition to the information on alcohol intake, the program also includes information about alcohol elimination, information that is typically not part of alcohol intake messages. People find it difficult to gauge their own blood alcohol level as there are many factors that need to be considered such as:

- the amount of alcohol consumed
- the period of time over which alcohol is consumed
- one's body mass

- whether or not food has been eaten
- the person's fitness level
- the health of the liver.

The results vary between individuals and alcohol types. During one program, two participants consumed different strength beer, each person drinking eight pots (285ml, equivalent to one standard drink). By the end of the evening the participant drinking light beer had a reading of 0.044%, the participant drinking heavy beer had a reading of 0.099%.

Feedback regularly highlights the myth of one standard drink per hour keeping a patron under the legal driving. This is not true, as a serving of wine is typically two standard drinks. Most participants are surprised at their readings:

- The wife of the bank manager was shocked to reach 0.079% after two standard drinks of wine and she said, *"I would normally drink 2 glasses of red wine in the afternoon then go pick the kids up from school"*.
- Another female reached 0.169% after consuming four glasses of wine and was gob smacked to learn that with an average elimination rate of .01 per hour, it would take 16 hours by the time she is 0.00.

The groups have been targeted specifically: media to get the story out, hairdressers because we were told they were the 'psychologists' of the town and everyone talks to a hairdresser, Shire Councillors because of their influence, Goodsports Program to get the message into sporting clubs, etc. We are now delivering the program to one of the biggest industry employer groups in the region as they see the value in all of their 150 plus contractors attending the program.

Costs

A breakdown of the costs is as follows:

Meal	\$15
Drinks (4 drinks per hour during 3 hour period allowed)	\$35
Facilitators 2 police/4bar staff for 3 hours	\$500
Venue Hire	\$50
Promotion/admin	\$50
TOTAL	\$650 per program

Participants pay \$25.00 including meal and drinks. The majority of costs are off-set by in-kind contribution from Liquor Accord members: Police give their time, licensees pay their bar

staff to attend the training, the venue does not charge for room hire and makes no profit on drinks/meals. Full costs average \$1,350 or \$90 per person.

Is being safe not sorry achieving outcomes

Since 2003 there had been increases in the typical offences in and around licensed premises in Sale – assaults, property damage, and behavioural offences – as well as public complaints of drunken, loutish behaviour. Behavioural offences particularly were steadily increasing however there was a 67% reduction in behavioural offences once Being Safe Not Sorry was introduced in September 2005.

2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007
92	98	62	32

(Victoria Police Crime Statistics, Sale Response Zone 2003-2007)

Feedback from licensees and hospitality staff consistently highlight that this program is very effective in teaching people about RSA.

"It's great to see the local police actively aiding the local community in raising peoples awareness of alcohol consumption and the relevant laws".

"The actual hands on - working in the industry you don't always get time to actually observe people - at least not the same people"

Why is being safe not sorry so potently effective

- Draws on the Principles of adult learners - active participation, meaningful material, multi-sensory learning and positive reinforcing knowledge learnt – to answer questions most people want to know: what is my BAC and am I safe to drive.

- The evening is treated as a fun night out and feedback consistently supports the format as outlined being very successful in achieving outcomes.

- Underpinned by a robust Wellington Central Liquor Accord. The goodwill and commitment by Accord members is the difference that takes **being safe not sorry** from being a good drink driving exercise to a very successful program reinforcing the three elements of the program.

- Drives home the key messages in the 2003 **TAC Only a little bit over? You bloody idiot** campaign by:
 - reinforcing the message that low level drink driving is being targeted and detection is likely (enforcement)
 - demonstrating physical signs of impairment at low blood alcohol levels (education)

- further reminder of the likelihood of detection (enforcement)
- showing the consequences of a conviction for drink driving on the driver and beyond to family, friends and the workplace (education/emotive)
- reinforcing that police target drink drivers in covert operations, and will not give any leeway to drivers at or above the limit (enforcement).
- showing that you don't have to be drunk to be over the limit and that you can't judge your BAC by how you feel. If you drive and crash, beyond incurring a fine, losing your licence or even serving a jail sentence, the consequences of drink-driving could haunt you for life - even if you were only a little bit over. (education/emotive).

➤ The simple yet effective model can be easily duplicated.

Where to from here

being safe not sorry is expanding throughout Gippsland and continues achieving significant outcomes. Corporate areas are embracing the concept within an Occupational Health and Safety aspect.

The Parliamentary Road Safety Committee on the Review of the Inquiry into the Incidence and Prevention of Pedestrian Accidents in 2006 reported its concern that *"it is likely that many young people would not be aware of the time needed to eliminate alcohol from their body, especially important to probationary drivers with a zero alcohol licence restriction. The **being safe not sorry** program offers an innovative and interactive way for individuals to understand their personal reaction and readings for alcohol consumed. The Committee believes that access to breathalysers and programs like **being safe not sorry** is necessary to achieve a personalised understanding of how individuals metabolise alcohol."* The following recommendations were also made:

Recommendation 26. That VicRoads trial further alcohol awareness programs similar to the Wellington Shire Council (Victoria) Liquor Licensing Accord's Being Safe, Not Sorry program throughout Victoria

Recommendation 27. That VicRoads consider a wider application of alcohol awareness programs similar to the Being Safe, Not Sorry program, to apply to all young drivers within the Graduated Licensing System.

(Report of the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee on the Review of the Inquiry into the Incidence and Prevention of Pedestrian Accidents 2006 Parliamentary Paper No. 235 Session 2003-2006)