

2.5 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding steps to increase penalties for selling or providing alcohol to juveniles:

Following the announcement that the incidence of admission of underage drinkers to the Accident and Emergency Unit at the General Hospital has increased substantially in recent times, is the Minister taking any steps to increase the penalties for selling or providing alcohol to juveniles, and if not, why not?

Senator W. Kinnard (The Minister of Home Affairs):

Responsibility for the Licensing (Jersey) Law 1974, which covers the sale of alcohol to people under the age of 18 years, lies with the Minister of Economic Development. I am not therefore responsible for increasing the penalties for selling alcohol to juveniles. Under the Liquor (Restrictions on Consumption) (Jersey) Law 2005, the police have powers to ask anyone possessing alcohol which they believe is intended for young people to surrender the alcohol and to provide their name and address. The offence lies in failing to comply with the requests made by the police officer and attracts a maximum penalty of level 2 on the standard scale of £500. At present, I do not intend to increase the penalties levied under this Law, as it is a relatively new law designed to address the issue of young people drinking alcohol in public, rather than to criminalize them on grounds of possession.

2.5.1 Deputy of St. John:

The new campaign has just started, "Your Child - Your Responsibility" - for which I would like to congratulate all concerned on this initiative - but there have been instances, and I cannot of course refer to individual cases, of the police stopping parents, removing their children from crowds of young drinkers, and taking them home - I am sure for the best possible motives - but are we not in danger of giving the parents mixed messages? Does the Minister not agree?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I do not believe that we are giving parents mixed messages. Parenting is an incredibly difficult task. That is the first thing I would say. I do not wish to be drawn into an individual case, and it is clearly an individual case to which the Deputy is referring, and clearly an individual is always at liberty to make a complaint if they wish to do so. Clearly, there are individual issues in this particular case and I do not think this forum is the appropriate place to discuss them, but if the Deputy wishes me to discuss it with him outside of this most public forum, I would perhaps be able to discuss some elements of it.

2.5.2 Connétable M.J. Jackson of St. Brelade:

If I may briefly, Sir. On this matter I would be interested to know whether the Minister for Economic Development would consider reviewing the setting...

The Bailiff:

This is supposed to be a question to the Minister for Home Affairs.

Connétable M.J. Jackson:

It really links through her department, Sir, but I would like to know whether consideration could be given by either the Minister for Home Affairs or Economic Development to the retailing of alcohol through supermarkets. It seems to be a great part of the problem at the moment.

Senator W. Kinnard:

I am aware that in fact this issue is one that is looked at, and currently under the St. Helier strategy, there is a project group working with the licensing trade - including them - to look at aspects of the Licensing Law, including licensing hours and also the sale of alcohol through other outlets.