



## **OPERATION UNITE: Alcohol-related violence could be a matter of life or death**

7am, Wednesday 11 May, 2011

**Editors Note:** A video of the media conference will be posted onto the NSW Police Force YouTube page later today.

NSW Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione and State Coroner, Magistrate Mary Jerram, are warning the public to behave responsibly and avoid the dangers of alcohol-related behaviour – which can result in death – during this weekend’s latest stage of Operation Unite, an Australia and New Zealand-wide blitz against drunken violence.

NSW Police Commissioner, Andrew Scipione, is the state spokesperson for Operation Unite. He has welcomed State Coroner, Magistrate Mary Jerram’s calls for people to drink responsibly, because the harsh reality is alcohol-related behaviour can ultimately result in deaths.

“No-one knows better than our State Coroner about the fatal impact alcohol abuse can have on young lives, particularly violent behaviour on our streets,” Commissioner Scipione said.

NSW State Coroner, Magistrate Mary Jerram, does not want to see further victims of alcohol-fuelled violence in the morgue.

“I’ve seen too many grief stricken families in my court over the years trying to make sense of a night that claimed their loved-one as a result of excessive drinking,” Magistrate Jerram said.

“People must heed the warnings, if you get involved in drunken violence, chances are you will end up arrested, seriously injured or in the morgue.

“Once you’re dead, it’s too late to learn a lesson about alcohol-related violence. So, let the unfortunate deaths of others be a lesson for everyone else, know your limits and stick to them,” Magistrate Jerram said.

According to a report from the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation into *The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others*, 367 people died and almost 14,000 were hospitalised due to the alcohol-related behaviour of others in 2005 alone.

“It is senseless to think that 367 people died in one year due to the reckless alcohol-related behaviour of others. That is more than one person every single day,” Commissioner Scipione said.

“When are people going to get the message? The alcohol you drink and your consequent behaviour may not only hurt you but will most likely hurt someone else, and the result could be fatal.

“I am really fed up with the regular reports of senseless assaults, glassings and avoidable accidents because people can't handle their alcohol and realise when they have had enough,” Commissioner Scipione said.

The report also found more than 24,000 Australians were the victims of alcohol-related domestic violence while 20,000 children were victims of substantiated alcohol-related child abuse.

More than 70,000 Australians are victims of alcohol-related assaults every year.

This weekend, Operation Unite will see police crackdown on alcohol-related crime in every Australian state/territory and New Zealand.

“My officers will do everything in their power to deal with this problem, but when it comes down to it, it is a matter of personal responsibility,” Commissioner Scipione said.

“If you drink yourself into a stupor, then you are asking for trouble.

“You don't want to end up in a jail cell, contemplating how a criminal conviction could cost you your job, overseas travel, your reputation and ultimately, your freedom.

“Even worse, you could kill someone or end up dead yourself,” he added.

For the second time, Operation Unite is being staged twice in a year, with the second phase for 2011 being conducted in December.

Across New South Wales, scores of additional police will be on the lookout for unlawful and reckless behaviour.

The last phase of Operation Unite occurred on 17 and 18 December 2010, resulting in 2,617 arrests throughout Australasia.

“From that weekend in December, there are 723 people in New South Wales alone who can testify how one act of drunken stupidity led to their arrests,” Commissioner Scipione said.

NSW Police laid more than 1300 charges over that two day blitz.

“I have no sympathy for those who inflict violence on others, especially when they’re drunk, and then make all the excuses in the world as to why they should be treated leniently. Stop when you know you have had enough and you won’t get into trouble.”

The Commander of Operation Unite in New South Wales is Assistant Commissioner Denis Clifford.

He said the last couple of Unite operations showed how quickly police can respond to incidents, particularly in the heart of Sydney.

“There will be more than 700 additional uniformed and plain-clothes police on duty for the operation.

“This blitz is designed to both prevent alcohol related violence through a high profile police presence, as well as enforce the law in known trouble spots.

“We will be watching your every move through Council and RTA cameras. Those cameras not only monitor trouble, allowing us to quickly guide police to the hotspots, the footage can be used to prosecute offenders,” Assistant Commissioner Clifford said.

“Don’t sober up in a police cell, call it quits early enough so you don’t invite trouble.

“Officers will be enforcing the responsible service of alcohol. People who ignore instructions to quit a licensed establishment will be slapped with a \$550 fine. Resist further or resort to violence and they will face arrest,” Assistant Commissioner Clifford said.

The weekend crackdown will feature a host of specialist units to assist Local Area Commands, including Mounted Police, Marine Area Command, Alcohol Licensing Enforcement Command (ALEC), Public Order and Riot Squad (PORS), Dog Squad, Highway Patrol, Commuter Crime Unit, Operational Support Group and Aviation Support Branch.

In the three previous Operations, NSW Police have arrested a total of 2,100 people (640 in December 2009, 737 in September 2010 and 723 in December 2010), laying 3,440 charges (1,025 in December 2009, 1,101 in September 2010 and 1,314 in December 2010).

7,820 people have been arrested throughout Australasia to date (2,781 in December 2009, 2,432 in September 2009 and 2,617 in December 2010).

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