
Sunday, 16 December 2007

DRINK SPIKING LAWS NOW FULLY IN FORCE

As many South Australians party on through the festive season, they can now do so knowing that from today the State's tough drink spiking laws are fully in force to protect them.

Attorney-General Michael Atkinson says the remaining provisions of the new laws relate to possession of prescription drugs or controlled drugs in licensed premises between nominated hours (9pm to 5am) without proper packaging and the prescribed label.

Mr Atkinson says the law relates to drugs capable of producing a state of intoxication - so antibiotics, eye drops, and asthma puffers (for example) are not covered.

He says it is an element of the offence that the drugs be **not** contained in packaging or have on them a prescribed label indicating lawful prescription.

"I am pleased that we have been able to get these laws in place before the Christmas and New Year parties get fully in swing," Mr Atkinson says.

"People can now go to their parties with the full knowledge that they are protected by some of the toughest drink spiking laws in the country.

"Spiking someone's drink is not a joke.

"It is a devious act often designed to allow someone to take advantage of the victim leading to a range of crimes including robbery and sexual assaults," Mr Atkinson says.

Previously published research suggests that four out of five drink-spiking victims are female, while around half are aged under-24.

One research project on drink spiking conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology indicates that between 3,000 and 4,000 incidents of alleged drink spiking occur in Australia each year, with around **one third of those involving sexual assault.**

Earlier this year, the Government introduced a new law that made drink spiking itself a criminal offence for the first time, carrying a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment.

"This law sends a clear message that drink and food spiking is not a trivial issue and offenders will face hefty penalties – whether a person's life is put in danger or not."