

# Praise and criticism for stance on trading hour laws

**Cathy O'Leary and Phoebe Wearne**

Health experts say WA's liquor review has gone tough on the harm caused from alcohol by resisting calls for extended trading hours.

While hospitality groups claim the review of the Liquor Control Act is biased, health lobbyists say it is a serious attempt to address alcohol problems while not impinging on the rights of people who drink sensibly.

The review has also backed the stance of Churchlands mother-of-four Samantha Menezes, who campaigned last year for penalties for adults who supply alcohol to underage drinkers without their parents' consent.

Mrs Menezes said she believed her message had resonated with parents and the community.

"It shows the power of people, and it would have been incredibly disappointing if it didn't get through," she said.

McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth director Mike Daube said the committee had recommended public education programs, curbs on inappropriate alcohol promotion and other measures to protect children and the community.

"The report does not recommend any significant changes to trading hours and notes that the right to sell alcohol is a privilege, not a right," he said.

Terry Slevin, from the Cancer Council WA, said the report was

geared towards stronger harm reduction measures.

"The independent committee seem to have taken the job seriously and, while we might not agree with its entirety, it presents a useful blueprint for progress," he said.

However, Tourism Council of WA chief executive Evan Hall said the report focused heavily on issues raised by the police, the health lobby and licence holders but ignored consumers.

"We are highly concerned your average punter has been forgotten in this process and it is absolutely critical that the legislation recognises the needs of consumers, particularly our tourist guests," he said.

Australian Hotels Association chief executive Bradley Woods said the report was a mixed "grab bag" of health and police interests that gave little regard to what the consumer and tourism and hospitality industries needed.

"I think instead of capturing the opportunity to see removal of red tape and see the elimination of unnecessary burden and regulation on the industry, they have missed that boat," he said.

"The review doesn't take the opportunity to modernise WA's liquor licensing system. There is still the restriction on Sunday night trading for bars and hotels to shut at 10pm — we are still talking about 1950s-type regulations."

Mr Woods was also opposed to a



**Pleased: Samantha Menezes with children Holly and Lachlan.**

proposal to allow police to use police cadets in controlled purchase or “sting” operations.

He said the review should be the first step in a long process and he expected extensive industry consultation would follow but Professor Daube urged the State

Government to act quickly on the recommendations.

“This was a committee of three highly regarded, totally independent businesspeople who have examined the evidence carefully, so it is a bit late to be attacking a neutral referee,” he said.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Introduction of secondary supply laws, making secondary supply of alcohol to juveniles on unlicensed premises an offence
- Larger licensed venues made to pay bigger licensing fees
- Hopes for longer trading hours dashed, with Sundays before public holidays the only exception
- Restaurants able to serve liquor without a meal to seated patrons as long as the kitchen remains open
- High-risk venues required to introduce ID scanning technology
- Allow police to use police cadets in controlled purchase or “sting” operations
- Licensees selling packaged liquor required to request ID from people who appear to be aged under 25