

Drinking stories

Thursday, 20 July 2006

It is often interesting to take two different newspaper stories and put them together to make a third story that is yet to be written. This is one of those.

A shocking story in the Star last week (11.07.06) about Sunshine traders calling for action on drunken abuse. Two women on Hampshire Rd complained a drunken person had threatened to shoot them and bomb their cafe. (p.3) The man had been harassing other traders before he entered their shop.

Threats to kill would normally be taken very seriously, though perhaps not in Sunshine. The man was drunk after all and therefore could not have been a terrorist, for example. Still, the women feared for their safety and that is simply unacceptable.

Brimbank District Police Inspector Scott Mahoney had his own views, and advised that Brimbank is a different ballgame.

If the Council sees fit to declare the area an alcohol free zone and if they're prepared to establish laws accordingly to prosecute them, then we'll be happy to issue penalty notices he said.

The District Inspector is waiting for Brimbank Council to make new laws (!!) and that is the first story.

The second story comes from the Age today (20.7.06) which quotes the Victorian Ombudsman as saying Victoria is the only State in Australia where being drunk in a public place is of itself a criminal offence.

An Ombudsman's report condemns conditions in gaols (p.3) and finds breaches of United Nations standards in Victoria's Custody System. A report from the Ombudsman four years ago also found serious flaws in the System, and the recommendations from that time have been ignored.

The Ombudsman's statement confirms that public drunkenness is a criminal offence in Victoria, that is the second story.

The third story is that criminal acts on Sunshine streets are condoned at the highest levels. I dont know which of the three stories is more shocking.

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