

HILLSIDE



SPORT

Binge on sport instead

Free support to turn sportspeople away from binge drinking is paying dividends.

Former tennis ace turned MP, John Alexander (Bennelong, NSW) has praised the work of the Australian Drug Foundation's Good Sports program in tackling the problem of binge drinking.

"The organisation Good Sports have been very successful in reducing risky binge-drinking behaviour in local sporting organisations," Mr Alexander told federal parliament.

"They have overseen a 15 per cent drop in short-term harm such as violence and injury and a 14 per cent drop in long-term harm like cancer and cirrhosis of the liver."

By providing free support to help reduce high-risk drinking, the Good Sports program encourages sporting clubs to focus more on young people, families and participation in sport and less on drinking alcohol.

The program aims to create positive and healthy sporting communities and to reduce a culture of binge drinking which, according to Mr Alexander, is present across all communities.

For clubs that serve alcohol or allow members to bring alcohol to the facilities, Good Sports provides guidance to meet state and territory laws. Clubs can benefit from access to responsible service of alcohol training at a reduced cost.

For clubs that host post-match functions where alcohol is available, Good Sports provides support to reduce alcohol related risks and change binge drinking culture. ■

TRANSPORT

Stability controls boost truck safety

Electronic stability control systems (ESC) should be introduced on dangerous goods tankers nationwide, federal parliament has been told.

In 2013, 13 per cent of all road accidents in Australia involved trucks, resulting in 167 deaths.

"One important and relatively easy step that the Commonwealth government can take to make our roads safer is to regulate the use of ESC systems on our trucks," said Cathy McGowan (Indi, Vic).

The New South Wales government has made it mandatory for all dangerous goods tankers to be fitted with ESC by 2019.

But Ms McGowan said the only way to get nationwide use of the system is for the federal government to act on this issue.

"Everyone across Australia relies on our network of highways and major roads. We need these highways to be safe," she said.

She praised constituents Jack and Jenny Murray for their lobbying efforts to get national reform on ESC. The Murrays lost their daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren when a fuel tanker struck their car on the Princes Highway.

Ms McGowan said mandating ESC will greatly decrease the chance that families will be subjected to the suffering and loss the Murrays have faced over the past four years.

Retrofitting a truck with ESC costs about \$5,000 to \$10,000 per truck.

"While there is no doubt that this represents a significant up-front cost for trucking businesses, a single crash of a tanker carrying dangerous goods can cost up to half a million dollars, not to mention the immeasurable cost in lives lost," Ms McGowan said. ■

MEDIA

Online radio goes offline

Many people in regional Australia still aren't able to listen to their choice of radio station online.

Member for Canberra (ACT) Gai Brodtmann has called on the federal government to resolve the ambiguity that currently exists around whether online broadcasting is a simulcast or a separate broadcast.

"While this ambiguity exists, radio stations are paying double for their licensing fees, which has forced nearly 200 regional radio stations, including many right here in Canberra, to cease online broadcasting altogether," she said.

Ms Brodtmann said it was ironic that Australians can listen to radio online from all over the world, but not from some of their local stations.

She said constituents had told her it seemed unfair that radio stations are expected to pay additional payments for online broadcasting.

"Of course, the great irony is that it is regional Australians who benefit most from being able to use the internet to overcome the tyranny of distance."

She urged the government to implement recommendations from the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee to resolve the ambiguity around online radio broadcasting and simulcasts.

"In 2014, it is not too much to ask to be able to listen to radio online," she said. ■

