

REPORT ON EASTERN CAPE UNDERAGE DRINKING SUMMIT

28 JUNE 2025 - EAST LONDON



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SECTION I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a synopsis of a summit held on 28 June 2025 at the Abbotsford Christian Centre in East London, which focused on addressing underage drinking in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. In maintaining the spirit of the summit, a 21 km Underage Drinking Awareness race took place on the 29th of June in East London, bringing together people from all walks of life. The Eastern Cape Liquor Board organised this summit due to concerns about potential unsupervised parties, known as "pens down parties," where learners consume alcohol after exams. These gatherings have raised safety issues, prompting authorities to address the problem. The main aim of the summit was to develop actionable strategies to curb underage alcohol consumption and promote healthier lifestyle choices among young people.

The keynote address of the summit was delivered by the Acting Premier of the Eastern Cape MEC Mvoko, who highlighted factors contributing to underage drinking, such as alcohol availability, marketing influences, and community negligence. The MEC of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs emphasised the role of community involvement and the impact of educational programs led by peer ambassadors in addressing the issue. Key takeaways included the need for a collective societal approach to change mindsets, the importance of collaboration among local governments, schools, and families, and the necessity of enforcing existing laws against the sale of alcohol to minors.

Various speakers, including government officials, law enforcement officers, traditional leaders, businesspeople, faith-based organisations, researchers, university academics, parents and youth representatives, discussed the impact of alcohol on society, the importance of community involvement, and the need for stricter regulations and education around alcohol consumption. The general themes that emerged include the responsibility of parents and communities in preventing underage drinking, the role of legislation and enforcement, and the necessity for collaboration among various stakeholders to create effective solutions. The discussions also highlighted the need for awareness campaigns, educational reforms, and community engagement to foster a culture of responsibility and accountability regarding alcohol consumption.

Despite growing challenges, signs of positive engagement from students in prevention efforts were noted.

WELCOME NOTE

Mr Gobingca - Chairperson of the Eastern Cape Liquor Board (ECLB)



The ECLB, an entity under the Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT), is tasked with a multifaceted mandate to regulate the liquor industry in the province.

Mandate of the ECLB

The primary mandate of the ECLB is to regulate the liquor industry within the province. This involves ensuring that businesses involved in the sale or distribution of alcohol operate legally and in compliance with established regulations and licensing conditions. Beyond regulatory oversight, the Board is committed to addressing the social ills stemming from alcohol consumption, particularly underage drinking and alcohol abuse.

Key Responsibilities: Ensuring that individuals and businesses obtain liquor licenses legally and adhere to the stipulated regulations and conditions. Addressing the societal consequences of alcohol abuse, including underage drinking, through proactive measures and community engagement.

Rationale for a Provincial Approach

Initially conceptualised as an Eastern Cape Liquor Board Summit, the event was elevated to a provincial level to enhance its visibility and impact. By branding it as the *Underage Provincial Summit*, the Board aimed to underscore the issue's significance and rally province-wide support. This strategic decision was made in consultation with DEDEAT, the Board's shareholder, to ensure the summit's prominence and effectiveness.

Stakeholder Engagement

The summit brought together a diverse group of participants to ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing alcohol-related challenges. This inclusive approach reflects the Board's recognition that combating underage drinking and alcohol abuse requires collective action across all sectors of society.

The ECLB acknowledged the progress made in regulating the liquor industry but emphasised the need for broader collaboration to address the social consequences of alcohol misuse. The summit served as a platform to forge partnerships and galvanise support from all stakeholders. By the conclusion of the event, the Board aimed to establish a network of committed partners to amplify efforts in combating the scourge of underage drinking and alcohol abuse. The Board extended a warm welcome to all participants and looked forward to fruitful discussions that would strengthen collective efforts to create a safer and healthier province.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CEO Dr Makala - Eastern Cape Liquor Board



The ECLB had the privilege to be joined by a distinguished group of leaders and stakeholders whose contributions are vital to the success of the initiative. The following individuals and groups were recognised for their attendance and dedication:

Traditional Leadership: Nkosi Matanzima, Western Tembuland Kingdom, Nkosi Sandile, Marharhabe Kingdom, Nkosi Sigcawu, AmaXhosa Kingdom, Nkosi Gwadiso, Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Government Representatives, Acting Premier of the Eastern Cape, MEC Pieters, Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT), and host of the summit, MEC Nqatha, Department of Safety and Department of Transport Community Safety and Liaison, Deputy Minister Soty, Department of Tourism, Deputy Minister Godlimpi, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Deputy Minister Ncamashe, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Mayors from various districts and local municipalities, Officials from national and provincial departments, Liquor Authorities and Organizations, CEOs and Chairpersons of Liquor Authorities from Mpumalanga, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, and Northern Cape, CEO of Aware.org, Academic and Educational Institutions, Representatives from: Nelson Mandela University, Rhodes University, Walter Sisulu University, University of Fort Hare, Port Elizabeth TVET College, Lovedale TVET College, Researchers,

Sponsors: ABSA, AVIS, Daily Dispatch, BASA, Aware.org, LUNIKA, uMhlobo Wenene FM, Coca-Cola, EC Gambling Board, SKG, Asipiko.

The presence of such a diverse and committed group of stakeholders is a testament to the importance of the summit. As the summit proceeded, participants were asked to engage with purpose and unity to develop actionable solutions to combat underage drinking and alcohol abuse.

On behalf of the ECLB and all organisers, the CEO extended her heartfelt gratitude to the Acting Premier for the opportunity to address the summit. She implored everyone to work collaboratively to ensure the success of their initiative and make a lasting impact on our province and nation.

PURPOSE OF THE SUMMIT

Our MEC Pieters has consistently advocated for stronger and more integrated interventions to protect young people. She has supported and attended responsible drinking campaigns to ensure a safer and sustainable growth of the liquor industry in the Eastern Cape. To her, the summit was not just an event, but a call to action.

MEC Pieters - Economic Development and Environmental Affairs



The summit was anchored on six objectives that need to be achieved:

- To develop a shared understanding of the role of stakeholders in keeping underage drinking in our province, the Eastern Cape.
- To foster an integrated approach in tackling the scourge of underage drinking.
- To promote multi-stakeholder commitment to the alleviation of underage drinking in the Eastern Cape.
- To heighten dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders in underage drinking interventions and to influence policy direction on alcohol abuse in general.
- To highlight and share what has worked and what has not worked in integrating and collaborating on underage drinking initiatives among various stakeholders.
- To identify and develop successful models that support collective responsibility and accountability in alleviating the scourge of underage drinking among stakeholders for action and impact.

The Provincial Summit on Underage Drinking and Alcohol Abuse, held in alignment with the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter on June 26, 2025, underscored the urgent need to address the pervasive issue of alcohol abuse among youth. This report highlights the critical consequences of underage drinking, as exemplified by personal testimonies, statistical evidence, and the collective responsibility to safeguard future generations.

The Consequences of Alcohol Abuse: A Case Study

The tragic story of Michael Clark, a drummer for the Birds, serves as a sobering reminder of the long-term consequences of alcohol abuse. Reflecting on his life, Clark shared two weeks before his passing in 1993 at age 47.

“When I was young, I did not care about what would happen when I get older and just kept drinking. But believe me, when you grew up, you wanted to live a full life. I know I did, but I robbed myself of about 30 years, and I cheated my son out of being his father.”

Clark’s death from liver cirrhosis, a condition often caused by long-term alcohol abuse, underscores the devastating impact of unchecked drinking. His story highlights the personal and familial toll of alcohol misuse, emphasising the need for early intervention to prevent such outcomes.

The Burden of Alcohol Abuse in South Africa

Research indicates that young people aged 15 to 29 bear the greatest burden of disease attributed to alcohol use in South Africa. The Eastern Cape ranks second among the nine provinces, following the Western Cape, in terms of high rates of alcohol abuse. Alarming, nearly one in five learners in the province begins drinking before the age of 13, a statistic that demands immediate action to protect our youth from the risks of early alcohol exposure.

Key Concerns

- **Early Exposure to Alcohol:** The alarming rate of learners consuming alcohol before age 13 highlights the need for targeted interventions in schools and communities.
- **School Environments:** Studies suggest that some high schools may inadvertently create social and cultural environments that encourage alcohol use, necessitating a re-evaluation of school policies and programs.
- **Societal Responsibility:** Underage drinking is not solely the responsibility of the ECLB but a societal issue requiring collaboration across all sectors.

Connection to Historical Context

In commemoration of 70 years of the Freedom Charter, the summit drew inspiration from the sacrifices of the youth of 1976, who fought for a better future. The gains of their struggle must not be undermined by the challenges facing the youth, particularly the “2K generation.” The collective responsibility to protect future leaders from self-destruction aligns with the principles of the Freedom Charter, which envisions a society that prioritises the well-being of all its members.

Call to Action

The summit served as a platform to adopt a collective approach to mitigate and prevent underage drinking. Stakeholders were urged to:

- Develop and implement strategies to reduce alcohol accessibility for minors.
- Strengthen educational programs that promote awareness of the risks of alcohol abuse.
- Foster partnerships among government, traditional leaders, educational institutions, and community organisations.
- Empower youth to actively participate in creating solutions to prevent underage drinking.

The responsibility to save future leaders from the dangers of alcohol abuse lies with all adults.

Focus of the Summit

The program director asserted that young people were central to all summit deliberations. She urged attending learners to take every discussion and speech seriously, particularly regarding the risks of alcohol indulgence. She also requested applause for the present learners and their schools, while praising the liquor board for facilitating significant youth representation.

Commendation of ECLB Leadership

Under the introduced leader's direction, she further stated the ECLB had transcended mere regulation/compliance to become:

- A voice of conscience
 - A convener of communities
 - A catalyst for change
- This transformation was reportedly evidenced by specific initiatives:
- The *21-kilometer awareness race* honouring lives lost at Enyobeni.
 - Deployment of *learner ambassadors* across all Eastern Cape schools (urban, peri-urban, rural).
 - Strategic partnerships with *faith-based groups, universities, traditional leaders, academia, and civil society*.
 - Strengthened enforcement of liquor regulations, including publicised clampdowns on non-compliant traders.



Participants at the summit

The programme director mentioned that one of the things that the Eastern Cape Liquor Board does so well is to look for partners and collaborators for all their programs that they do. Whether it is the 21-kilometre race, whether it is the ECLB peer ambassador program, all their programs are centred around partnerships and sponsorships, and the summit was no different.

SECTION 2

MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

This section outlines important messages of support from various stakeholders and government officials. Section 3 follows to present key themes that emerged from the messages with recommendations, and the second part presents recommendations from panel discussions. Panel discussions really delved into solutions that the summit was intended for to curb the scourge of underage drinking.



The Clergy representing the Religious Fraternity

The clergy emphasised that child-rearing practices should be such that even when parents are not around, their teachings should remain.

It is written that "*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not withdraw from it.*" As parents, we have been entrusted with the grave responsibility of preparing and instructing our children about the love that their parents and their creator have for them.

Safe Boundaries for Children Versus Unlimited Freedom for the Youth

From the main scripture above, one can deduce that structure provides a sense of security for children. Age-appropriate rules, such as limits on screen time or assigned chores, foster accountability. As children mature, gradually increasing their autonomy allows them to learn from small mistakes, building sound judgment for future, more significant decisions.

By recognising each child's uniqueness and grounding them in core values, this framework of purposeful guidance equips young individuals with the tools to navigate life with confidence and integrity. Consistent boundaries and growing freedom create a balance that fosters both security and independence, preparing them for a purposeful future.

A message of support - CEO Ms. Tulo – Aware.org



Research cited by Ms. Tulo revealed that 50% of South African teenagers consume alcohol, with the majority beginning before the age of 18. Over one-third of youth have consumed alcohol, and between 12% and 25% of surveyed groups report regular consumption, underscoring the severity of the issue. In the Eastern Cape, the problem is particularly acute, as the province ranks second nationally for high rates of alcohol abuse. These statistics emphasise the need for targeted interventions to protect young people from the risks associated with early alcohol use.

Summit Objectives and Youth Engagement

The summit served as a platform to unite policymakers, community leaders, educators, parents, and youth in a collective effort to combat underage drinking. Ms. Tulo emphasised the pivotal role of young people, describing them as the “makers of tomorrow” and the future leaders of South Africa. The summit aimed to empower youth not only to listen but to actively contribute to solutions, recognising their agency in shaping a healthier future for the country.

Key Messages to Youth

- **You Are the Future:** Young people are not merely passive participants but key stakeholders in addressing underage drinking. Their voices and ideas are essential to crafting effective solutions.
- **Active Participation:** The summit encouraged youth to engage actively, share perspectives, and take ownership of initiatives to reduce alcohol abuse in their communities.

Aware.org: Mandate and Contributions

Ms. Tulo introduced Aware.org, the Association for Alcohol Responsibility and Education, as the harm reduction arm of the alcohol industry. Aware.org’s mandate focuses on reducing alcohol-related harm through:

- **Behaviour Change Campaigns:** Educating and empowering stakeholders to promote responsible alcohol consumption.
- **Research and Data Generation:** Conducting evidence-based research to inform policy and interventions, as highlighted by MEC Pieters’ emphasis on data-driven approaches.
- **On-the-Ground Interventions:** Implementing programs in schools and communities to address underage drinking directly.

Aware.org serves as a bridge between policy, practice, and community voices, fostering long-term impact through collaborative efforts. Recognising that underage drinking is a complex issue that cannot be resolved overnight, Aware.org advocates for sustained, multi-faceted strategies to achieve meaningful change.

Drivers of Underage Drinking

Aware.org's recent research, conducted with over 1,000 young people, identified the primary drivers of underage drinking:

- **Peer Pressure:** Social influences significantly contribute to alcohol consumption among youth.
- **Home Environment:** Behaviours observed at home play a critical role in shaping young people's attitudes toward alcohol.

Aware.org's research underscores the importance of tailored, community-specific solutions, as no two communities face identical challenges. Key findings include:

- **Media and Community Channels:** These play a crucial role in shaping youth perceptions and behaviours.
- **Digital Media and Influencers:** Digital platforms, particularly those driven by influencers, fill educational gaps but also intensify peer pressure.
- **Effective Messaging:** Content that combines education and entertainment, such as sports programs, resonates strongly with youth. The planned race event is an example of such an initiative.
- **Gender and Age Differences:** Girls and younger teens respond differently to messaging compared to boys and older teens, necessitating targeted approaches.

Key Programs

Aware.org collaborates with organisations like the School of Hard Knocks and the Siya Kolisi Foundation to deliver youth-centred programs. A notable initiative in partnership with the ECLB, led by Dr. Msiya, is a peer-to-peer-led schools program targeting 40 schools and reaching 25,000 learners within one year. This program exemplifies the power of collaboration in creating impactful, scalable interventions.

Acknowledgments

The success of the summit is attributed to the collaborative efforts of all participants, including:

- **Eastern Cape Liquor Board and Dr Msiya's Team:** For their leadership and partnership in youth-centred programming.
- **Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT):** For hosting the summit.
- **Provincial Government:** For their support and commitment to addressing underage drinking.
- **Aware.org Members and Funders:** For enabling impactful programs and campaigns.
- **Community Stakeholders and Youth:** For their active participation and dedication to creating a brighter future.

A Message from Student Ambassadors

We know that in higher institutions of learning, when it comes to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), the first thing that students think of is alcohol. The speaker had to reflect on the ambassadorship program that has been implemented in various higher learning institutions. The initiative aims to combat alcohol abuse and encourage students to take responsibility for their academic performance. By empowering students to make informed decisions, a safer and more supportive environment that fosters success is being created.

The alcohol reduction program was first launched in 2021. Through this program, the ECLB seeks to ensure students in higher education institutions are effectively capacitated to make informed decisions whenever they decide to indulge in alcohol. This program's efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm are crucial, especially considering the high rates of alcohol consumption on campuses. She gave examples of how excessive drinking has led to tragic incidents, and it was clear that it can also impact students' academic performance. Some students may even struggle to balance their social lives with their studies, leading to poor grades or even dropouts.

Student ambassadors have a vital role to play in promoting responsible choices and supporting their peers; by sharing information and resources, they can help students understand the risks associated with excessive drinking and encourage them to prioritise their well-being. Ultimately, the goal is to create a campus culture that values academic excellence, personal growth and mutual support. By working together, this vision is achievable and that institutions of higher learning are places where students can thrive.

The student respectfully urged community leaders, traditional leaders, religious fraternity and councillors, including government departments, to collaborate with them in supporting recreational facilities in our communities. Through collective effort, the issue of underage drinking can be addressed, as it affects everyone, and a safer and healthier environment for the youth can be created. In conclusion, she urged the youth not to drown their future, but to drink responsibly.



Student ambassadors and (far right) Eastern Cape Youth Council Representative

A Message of Support from the Eastern Cape Youth Council

In addition to regulatory and enforcement strategies, the ECYC advocates for the restoration of African value systems as a means to instil responsible behaviour among youth. During a meeting with the CEO in 2024, ECYC discussed the importance of integrating cultural values into youth development programs to address the root causes of underage drinking. This approach emphasises respect, community responsibility, and ethical conduct, which are seen as critical to guiding young people toward positive choices. ECYC is committed to ensuring that interventions respect the rights of young people, advocating for culturally sensitive and balanced measures that do not infringe upon their freedoms.

The ECYC remains steadfast in its commitment to combating underage drinking through collaborative, regulatory, and culturally informed strategies. By working with government, local authorities, educational institutions, and communities, ECYC aims to create a safer and healthier environment for South Africa's youth. The summit held during Youth Month provided a vital platform for dialogue and action, reinforcing the importance of collective efforts to protect future generations. ECYC calls on all stakeholders to continue their commitment to this cause, ensuring that the potential of young people is nurtured and preserved for a brighter future.

A Message of Support from Learners



Learners ambassador

The learner having identified herself as a future human rights advocate, delivered a powerful personal testimony and call to action regarding underage drinking.

Self-Definition and Acknowledgement

- The speaker recounted being asked how she defined herself, responding that her actions and contribution to society define her, not self-imposed labels.
- She acknowledged her peers and the elderly present in the audience.

Personal Testimony and Transformation

- The ambassador disclosed being a victim of rape stemming from underage drinking.
- She stated that without the support and journey through the Eastern Cape Liquor Board brand ambassador program, she would still be overwhelmed by pain. She credited the ECLB program for enabling their transformation into a strong entity for their peers and society.

Call to Confront the Crisis

- Addressing the audience as "Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests and fellow citizens," the speaker declared that the gathering occurred at a precipice of a societal crisis: the surge of underage drinking.
- She described underage drinking as a plague ravaging youth innocence and imperilling the world's future, demanding collective attention and action.
- The learner emphasised that society stood at a crossroads between complacency and vigilance, and the choices made today would determine future generations' destiny. She asserted that the time for rhetoric was over and the time for resolve was now.
- She called for a crusade against underage drinking driven by unwavering determination, unshakable conviction, and unrelenting passion for children's well-being and the world's future.

Appeal to Parents and Societal Values

- Addressing parents as "your child," the speaker appealed for collaboration with the ECLB.
- The learner stressed the critical importance of upholding shared societal values, stating these values appeared to be the community's last option and backbone for action. Without shared values, she argued, progress would be impossible.

Emotional Appeal and Closing Message

- Referencing a song ("Abba, Sing a Song"), the speaker painted a picture of vulnerable children ("my mother's child") becoming victims on the streets in a cruel world.
- She passionately urged everyone to embark on working together to resolve the problem and concluded by reiterating the core youth message: "My future matters. Alcohol can wait."

Key Themes: Personal resilience through trauma, the transformative power of support programs (specifically ECLB), the urgent societal crisis of underage drinking, the necessity of collective action rooted in shared values, and a direct appeal to parents and the community for collaboration.

A Message of Support from National Liquor Traders: Mr L Ntimane



The National Liquor Traders' poetic message delivered was intended to motivate South African youth to embrace their potential, make positive life choices, and remain resilient in the face of challenges. It emphasises gratitude, self-awareness, and the rejection of harmful substances like alcohol, encouraging young individuals to take control of their paths and futures.

"I hope you can be the manifestation of your efforts today. Be the person who lives life to the fullest with less regrets. We are writing a message, a hope for our youth of South Africa, for your future. If life is kind, never forget to be grateful and also to be loving. If life is not kind, remember that you are doing great. Things will be better soon. I hope you never forget who you are and never lose your way. Choose your life. Choose your future. Say no to alcohol."

A message of support from Parents

From the parents who are fighting underage drinking alongside the liquor board. Nothing about parents without parents. If the police are unable to do their work here in South Africa, it's good because parents can implement the laws for them.

The parent further shared a proverb: The proverb's roots are often traced back to the bible, particularly Proverbs 16:27, which reads as follows: "Idle hands are the devil's workshop; idle lips are his mouthpiece". Ultimately, the proverb serves as a reminder that staying active and engaged can help individuals avoid negative influences and maintain a positive path. The parent encouraged young people to do a lot of activities. In fact, his main message of the day was that schools should be centres of activity because idle hands are the devil's workshop.



Some Parents representing SGB's

Deputy Minister Ncamashe - CoGTA



The Deputy Minister, being a traditionalist and a scholar, decided to use one of SEK Mqhayi's poems to critique alcohol abuse among the youth.

Mqhayi uses alcohol abuse as a metaphor to critique societal ills and the impact of colonialism on Xhosa society. The poem highlights the destructive nature of alcohol, not just as a substance, but as a symbol of cultural disruption and moral decay. It portrays alcohol as a tool used by colonisers to weaken and exploit the indigenous population, leading to a loss of identity, unity, and prosperity. The poem serves as a cautionary tale, urging people to recognise the dangers of alcohol abuse and its connection to broader social problems.

A breakdown of Mr Ncamashe's poetic analysis:

It became clear from the poetry that alcoholism leads to the loss of both identity and the togetherness of the African people. This is the outcome of the addiction to alcohol.

It is possible for someone to get so preoccupied with alcohol and the effects it has on them that they forget about their commitments, their friends, and their traditions.

In the poem, it is stated that excessive drinking leads to a decline in morality, the abandonment of one's family and community, and the decline of society as a whole.

This is a rallying cry: A call to action is also included in the poem, which is not at all a complaint.

In order for our people to rebuild their power and family cohesion, Mqhayi is making an effort to educate us about the negative effects of alcohol and to encourage us to take action to abstain from using it, as it was brought to us by colonisers.

Deputy Minister Soty - Tourism



The speaker, identifying herself as potentially the longest-serving member of parliament in the country based on their service spanning consecutive terms since at least 1999 (1999, 2004, 2009, etc.), delivered remarks focused on Youth Month reflections and government initiatives to combat unemployment and alcohol abuse.

Acknowledgement and Context

- The speaker expressed gratitude to the Eastern Cape provincial government for the initiative, stating she had never encountered something quite like it and committed to ensuring similar efforts would be made.
- As Youth Month drew to a close, she conveyed pride in the resilience and determination of South Africa's youth, noting nationwide celebrations honouring past generations, recognising present youth, and looking towards the future. The Deputy Minister emphasised reflecting on lessons learned to chart a way forward, stating they represented a generation that had "been through the worst."

Addressing Youth Unemployment and Its Link to Alcohol

- The speaker stated the country was grappling with high youth unemployment, advocating for a multi-faceted approach including investment in education and skills development, fostering youth entrepreneurship, and targeted employment programs.
- She linked the lack of opportunity to alcohol abuse, asserting that government efforts aimed to provide diverse opportunities post-matriculation, specifically to deter youth from indulging in alcohol.

Department of Tourism Youth Programs (Detailed)

The speaker outlined specific initiatives within the Department of Tourism designed to create pathways away from unemployment:

Internships and Business Focus: She claimed the program ensured 99% of internship participants were supported to establish their *own businesses* within the tourism sector, not just seek employment.

Comprehensive Support: This support includes financial assistance, bursaries for relevant studies, and free training for youth (tertiary graduates or matriculants) wanting to start companies.

Post-Establishment Mentorship: The Department provides 12 months of mentorship after company formation, focusing on financial management skills, followed by ongoing monitoring of company growth.

Marketing and Access: The Department is committed to assisting participants in marketing their companies and facilitating access to opportunities.

G20 Showcase: Highlighting the upcoming G20 event in Gauteng (November 2025), the speaker stated the Department would fund exhibition spaces and transport for qualifying SMMEs from all nine provinces to showcase their work, declaring a bright future for youth avoiding alcohol.

Call for Community Responsibility and Final Commitment

- Emphasising historical community values, the speaker stressed the collective responsibility of the community to nurture children into what South Africa needs.
- She reiterated that abundant opportunities exist for those who do not prioritise alcohol.
- The speaker concluded by making a firm commitment on behalf of the Department: everyone seeking opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industry would be assisted.

Deputy Minister Godlimpi - DTIC



The Deputy Minister outlined his three persistent areas of concern: the Gambling Board, the Liquor Board, and the Cannabis Master Plan.

Regarding the Liquor Board, the speaker stressed that its responsibilities extended beyond merely issuing alcohol distribution licenses. He emphasised that the Board also held accountability for addressing the detrimental effects of alcohol on communities. The speaker expressed appreciation for initiatives specifically targeting learners; however, he proposed reframing the discussion on underage drinking. While acknowledging the issue, he contended that South Africa faces a pervasive national drinking problem, which consequently manifests among children. The speaker argued that children were replicating deeply ingrained societal patterns of socialising with alcohol, raising the critical question of adult exemplars. Therefore, addressing underage drinking requires collective societal responsibility, including critical self-reflection by parents and adults on their own conduct. This approach avoids the hypocrisy of admonishing youth while not practising responsible drinking oneself.

Mr Godlimpi then shifted focus to the broader economic and trade-related consequences of alcohol abuse. He observed that South Africa was not unique in this struggle but highlighted a severe productivity issue, asserting that South Africans were typically productive for only three days within a seven-day week. This limitation has immense negative consequences for the country's competitiveness, with alcohol identified as a central factor restricting productive hours.

This lack of productivity was linked to challenges in building a vibrant economy. While initiatives to attract foreign investment and promote spatial transformation, such as increasing industrial activity in under-invested provinces like the Eastern Cape, were mentioned, the speaker questioned the readiness of the necessary social infrastructure to support such investment, specifically probing the existence of a functional labour market.

The speaker contested the common narrative of a skills shortage in South Africa. Instead, he proposed a fundamental problem with discipline and the effective application of existing skills. Regardless of skill level, a lack of discipline prevented sustainable livelihood, a notion often discussed casually but exacerbated by the major alcohol problem affecting overall community discipline. The speaker further underscored the connection between alcohol abuse and pervasive community violence, including the abduction of young

women and children and violence against the elderly. Alcohol was described as a central component of this societal violence, necessitating that any social mobilisation efforts directly confront this link.

Mr Godlimpi advocated for the massification and scaling up of social activities within diverse leadership institutions. He referenced the importance of reaching people involved with various movements, the establishment of schools, and initiatives like beauty pageants linked to academic excellence (specifically mentioning the Mathematics Olympiad). The speaker stressed the necessity of utilising the transformation fund effectively to explore and generate new economic activities, particularly concerning the Eastern Cape.

Finally, addressing targets for extending licenses and compliance in the Eastern Cape, the speaker expressed scepticism about simply issuing more licenses. He argued that the focus should instead be on critically examining the existing licensing conditions that create loopholes. He further emphasised that enforcement, including partnerships with municipalities for by-law enforcement, is crucial, and the burden of improvement should not fall solely on license holders.

The speaker concluded by asserting that alcohol abuse was deeply rooted in virtually every societal and economic challenge facing South Africa and strongly advocated for significantly intensified advocacy efforts to combat this scourge within communities and among children.

MEC Nqatha – Transport Community Safety and Liaison



Context and Core Message:

- MEC Nqatha framed the summit within a broader African context, observing that countries across the SADC region, including Namibia and Botswana, were actively reclaiming their mineral resources and asserting sovereignty. The challenge highlighted was for Africa to cease "pleading poor" amidst its abundant wealth.
- Linking this to the summit's purpose, the speaker recalled a quotation by O. R. Tambo, emphasising that Tambo had stressed the paramount importance of a nation's children for its future, asserting that any country, movement, or person failing to value its youth and children did not deserve its future.
- The speaker also paraphrased the late veteran Moses Kotane, conveying his message that while the future of South Africa belonged to its youth, it would ultimately be shaped by their actions. Consequently, the preoccupation of young people should extend beyond the future to encompass their actions in the present.

Alcohol as a Driver of Societal ills

- The speaker stated that South Africa faced an alarming crime rate, noting research demonstrating alcohol's role in fuelling crime, increasing mortality rates, and significantly contributing to gender-based violence and risky sexual behaviour linked to STIs, including HIV.
- Reference was made to recent quarterly crime statistics released in Queenstown, which reportedly showed alcohol contributing immensely to many crime incidents. It was observed that some of these crimes occurred in residential areas between people who knew each other.
- He highlighted alcohol's contribution to road fatalities in the province, citing the loss of at least 250 lives during the last festive season alone, with pedestrians constituting almost 40% of these fatalities, often involving hit-and-run incidents. General Wright in Buffalo City was mentioned as being able to attest to this.

Collaborative Efforts and Challenges

- The speaker reported that both the Department of Transport and Community Safety were dedicated to collaborating with various sectors, departments, and stakeholders to tackle the issues of illegal alcohol outlets (particularly during summer) and underage drinking province-wide.
- Close collaboration with municipalities was also mentioned, aimed at ensuring tavern and shebeen owners strictly adhered to bylaws.
- However, a significant challenge identified was the lack of capacity within many municipalities to enforce these bylaws. While SAPS was noted as being available to assist, the speaker emphasised that the core problem lies in unregulated environments. A direct appeal was made to municipalities to prioritise regulating the environment to facilitate bylaw enforcement in partnership with SAPS.

A Call to Youth

- As Youth Month celebrations neared their end, the speaker urged young people to draw inspiration from the youth of 1976 and 1944. The youth of 1944 were credited with radicalising the ANC towards a program of action, while the youth of 1976 fought Bantu Education, and the youth of the 1980s made apartheid ungovernable.
- The speaker declared that the future rested with the youth, expressing personal uncertainty about the current leadership's capacity to move the country beyond its current state. It was suggested that South Africa required a "second revolution," akin to movements in the SADC region, and that young people must push leadership forward to bring about necessary changes.
- Concluding with a pledge of support for the summit's program, the speaker issued a strong appeal to parents and law enforcement agencies: they must not allow young people to host "pens down" parties where alcohol consumption leads to chaos.

Nkosi Gwadiso - Chairperson of the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders



The Chief shared some scriptures which discourage people from abusing alcohol. Ephesians 5:18 says *Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery. This verse contrasts being intoxicated by alcohol with being filled with the Holy Spirit.* It encourages believers to choose a life guided by God's Spirit rather than being controlled by the effects of alcohol.

And the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying, ⁹ "Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations ¹⁰ You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹ and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them by Moses. Leviticus 10:8-11

He encouraged people to drink responsibly. If people drink, they must know when to drink, why do they drink, where to drink, and with whom they are drinking. He complained and expressed his concerns about those who exceed the drinking limit.

It was evident that with all of the speakers that rendered their messages of support, the ECLB was not short of collaborators, supporters, and everybody who attended the summit confirmed that the work done by the ECLB is not in vain.

MEC Mvoko - Acting Premier



The keynote speaker delivered an address emphasising the critical need for collective societal action to combat underage drinking, framing the summit as a pivotal response to past tragedies and a call for fundamental change.

Core Message and Urgency

The Acting Premier stated that the summit represented a "clarion call" and a "rallying point," driven by a deep sense of duty and heartache, particularly remembering the Scenery Park tragedy where 21 children died over two years prior.

He described this tragedy as a profound moral and societal failure, marking a turning point for the province. He emphasised that underage drinking is a societal issue demanding united action, declaring "Never again" should such tragedies occur due to societal neglect. He stressed the urgency to act now, with unity and urgency, to save the current generation.

Nature of the Problem

MEC Mvoko asserted that underage drinking is not merely a behavioural issue but a developmental crisis, undermining education, fuelling gender-based violence and crime, increasing school dropouts, and perpetuating cycles of poverty and addiction. He observed a contradiction regarding whether the issue is inherently "African," initially stating definitively, "This is not an African thing," but then remarking that, looking around, it appeared reflective of being an African thing. The speaker linked this to learned behaviours and fear.

He also highlighted the significant role of social media, marketing, and advertising in influencing youth, while acknowledging the alcohol industry's economic contributions and the need for balanced regulation in these areas. Parental influence and practices were identified as major factors, sometimes inadvertently encouraging underage drinking. The speaker stressed that parenting is fundamental to addressing the issue.

Call for Collective Action (Ubuntu)

The speaker repeatedly emphasised that combating underage drinking must be a "collective responsibility," invoking the philosophy of Ubuntu (I am because you are).

He declared that the success or failure of the summit depended on all members of society and that fighting alcohol abuse requires everyone to play a role, and lamented that hosting such a summit reflected poorly on society's current state.

The theme "Together for Tomorrow" was described as strategic, not symbolic, underlining that collective action is the only path to success.

Recommendations and Actions

Government: Called for concrete policy change, stricter regulations (especially around outlet proximity to schools and operating hours), proactive enforcement, and improved inter-departmental planning (e.g., between education and liquor licensing). Support was expressed for the Department of Education's decision to prohibit alcohol sales on school premises.

Law Enforcement: Demanded a zero-tolerance approach to cracking down on illegal taverns and sales to minors, requiring intensified proactive licensing audits by the liquor board.

Private Sector: Urged alcohol producers and retailers to adhere strictly to ethical marketing and distribution practices.

Communities and Institutions: Called on faith-based organisations, traditional leaders, and cultural institutions to mobilise value-based campaigns. Emphasised the need for innovative community dialogues and youth ambassador programs.

Parents/Caregivers: Stressed, they must be empowered to educate, supervise, and guide their children, and act as positive role models. Society needs to create better role models.

Youth: Insisted that young people must be active participants, not passive recipients. The speaker noted a lack of youth representation at the summit and argued that there should be more youth voices in the program speaking about the issue.

Specific Initiatives: Mentioned ongoing work with Education and Social Development on school-based prevention programs, expanding psychosocial support services, and strengthening coordination through a substance abuse prevention task team.

Vision and Conclusion

The speaker stated that policy alone is insufficient; what is needed is a "values-based uprising" where every adult takes responsibility and every institution acts as a protector.

He called for the summit to deliver a concrete, community-rooted, youth-driven, and enforcement-backed "people's plan of action," signalling an end to negotiating with indifference or complacency.

The speaker urged all leaders, citizens, parents, activists, and entrepreneurs to stand together to build a province where taverns exclude children, alcohol is not a rite of passage, and youth potential is nurtured.

He concluded by expressing hope that the memory of the Scenery Park children would awaken consciences and that the summit would mark the beginning of a new era of protection, prevention, and purpose.

The learners concluded the event by chanting affirmations led by the MC, declaring that their future matters, alcohol must wait, and "pens down" parties are not an option.

SECTION 3

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM THE MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

1. The significance of the theme 'Together for Tomorrow' in the context of the summit

The theme 'Together for Tomorrow' emphasises the need for a collective approach to mitigate and prevent underage drinking in communities, highlighting that it requires the involvement of all stakeholders, including government, families, and the youth themselves.

2. The role of parents and guardians in preventing underage drinking, according to the discussions

Parents and guardians play a crucial role in preventing underage drinking by setting boundaries, educating their children about the dangers of alcohol, and modelling responsible behaviour regarding alcohol consumption.

3. The contribution of the community in reducing underage drinking

Community members can contribute by reporting illegal alcohol sales, participating in awareness campaigns, and supporting local initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and provide recreational activities for youth.

4. Proposed strategies to combat underage drinking discussed in the summit

Proposed strategies include stricter enforcement of existing liquor laws, community education programs, involvement of youth in decision-making processes, and collaboration between various stakeholders, including schools, parents, and local governments.

5. The importance of involving young people in discussions about alcohol use

Involving young people in discussions about alcohol use is important because it empowers them to voice their opinions, share their experiences, and contribute to creating solutions that resonate with their peers.

6. Panellists' suggestions regarding the marketing of alcohol

Panellists suggested that there should be stricter regulations on the marketing of alcohol, particularly targeting youth, and that public awareness campaigns should highlight the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

7. The role of the ECLB in addressing underage drinking

The ECLB is responsible for regulating the liquor industry, enforcing compliance with liquor laws, and implementing programs aimed at preventing underage drinking and promoting responsible alcohol consumption.

8. Schools' contribution in preventing underage drinking

Schools can contribute by incorporating education about the dangers of alcohol into their curriculum, providing support services for students, and creating a safe environment that discourages alcohol use.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY STAKEHOLDERS AND SPEAKERS

- *Campaigns and Interventions:* Implement continuous behaviour change campaigns across the Eastern Cape and sustain on-the-ground interventions as long as underage drinking persists.
- *Engagement Strategies:* Leverage digital media and sports to actively combat underage drinking.
- *Cultural Restoration:* The ECYC advocates for the restoration of African value systems to guide youth behaviour.
- *Parental Responsibility:* Parents should refrain from purchasing alcohol for children and keep youth engaged through education and extracurricular activities to prevent idleness (the devil finds work for idle hands).
- *Youth Engagement:* Churches should organise mathematics Olympiads to occupy youth constructively.
- *Community Dialogues:* Calls for Imbizos to promote sober living.
- Alcohol was described as a central component of societal violence, necessitating that any social mobilisation efforts directly confront this link between alcohol and GBV.
- Utilise the transformation fund effectively to explore and generate new economic activities, particularly concerning the Eastern Cape.
- Enforcement, including partnerships with municipalities for by-law enforcement, is crucial, and the burden of improvement should not fall solely on license holders.
- *Tackle Illegal Taverns:* Prioritise addressing illegal taverns and enforcing regulations.
- *Parental Guidance:* Discourage "pens down" parties to reduce youth exposure to alcohol.
- Parents should not blame democracy and neglect their parental responsibility of nurturing children in a Godly way (Scriptures from the bible on how to avoid alcohol).
- People should generally avoid drinking in excess.
- This programme should not only focus on Black schools
- The society should not turn a blind eye to this scourge (this is a societal issue).
- Pro-active enforcement and a social compact towards a new society.
- The taxi industry, hotels and B&Bs should be held accountable for transporting and accommodating the underage learners during the Pens Down parties.
- A joint message should be issued by both departments (basic education and transport, Community Safety and Liaison) to discourage these parties.
- The 500-metre radius from liquor outlets to schools should be enforced.
- We need to be role models to our children and not pin our hopes on celebrities who are rich and famous.
- Closing liquor outlets is not a solution as the liquor industry is a multifaceted contributor to the economy.
- The private sector must adhere to ethical marketing.
- Faith-based organisations should conduct values-based campaigns rooted in our values and culture.
- The youth should be more involved, and fewer adults should talk at these campaigns and interventions.
- Operating hours for liquor outlets should be shortened.
- Policy alone will not help; a values-based uprising is necessary where every person becomes a protector and not a spectator.

- The summit should not only give resolutions and recommendations but also offer people-based actions and youth-driven solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Building a vigilant community against underage drinking and enhancing a whole-community approach (Moderated by Prof Liezille Jacobs - Rhodes University)

For this topic, panellists comprised of representatives from Rhodes University, Traditional leaders, South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, NGO, Religious Fraternity, Mpumalanga Liquor Authority and University of South Africa who recommended the following:

- Learners should contribute to value adding missions.
- Start early with prevention and educate children about the severity of alcohol use.
- CONTRALESA should be given the power that they used to have, where parents go to chiefs to discuss issues that affect villages in particular.
- The religious organisations should inculcate family values where the home is the centre of hope.
- Parents should not shift their responsibility to schools.
- Develop tools where members of the public can verify the displayed liquor licence (through scanning a QR code).
- Strengthen partnerships with SAPS.
- Cultural events that distribute alcohol to children should be addressed from home ceremonies to broader community events.
- Misleading messages about alcohol use through advertisements should be stopped.

Reducing availability, accessibility and the impact of marketing and advertising (Moderated by Mr Buku - TVET Colleges Bargaining Chamber)

For this topic, panellists comprised of representatives from the Drinks Federation of South Africa, Walter Sisulu University, South African Human Rights Commission, KwaZulu-Natal Liquor Authority and Northern Cape Liquor Authority who recommended the following:

- Local municipalities have a role to play in spatial planning and business rezoning to avoid using residential areas for business.
- Integrate this message into the Life Orientation curriculum and link it across curricula.
- Messages that deal with risks of alcohol use and protective measures should be propagated.
- YouTube and Spotify should be used by the ECLB sponsors to spread the message among the youth.
- Mental health assistance should be provided to the affected youth.
- Set digital boundaries on social media where alcohol adverts are blocked.

- The MEC of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs should start a campaign to completely eradicate the advertisement of alcohol.
- Licences should be revoked for holders who do not adhere to the regulations.
- About 20 outlets are licensed to one license in KwaZulu-Natal province (as a result, there is a need for cohesive effort by the government to regulate the outlets).
- Learners should be involved in policy review and updates.
- Instead of closing liquor outlets that operate legally, let us educate and empower the youth so that they can make informed decisions.
- People are calling for the finalisation of the Liquor Amendment Bill of 2016.

***Enforcement of compliance on the sale of alcohol to minors and relevant policy and legislation
(Moderated by Dr MJ Mudau – Limpopo Liquor Authority)***

For this topic, panellists comprised of representatives from SAPS, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, Buffalo City Metro, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, Limpopo Liquor Authority and Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance who recommended the following:

- The legislation is there, but because of loopholes in the system with police that lack teeth to bite, liquor outlets extend trading hours. (Interpret the law and correctly enforce Liquor Act 59 of 2003 in line with municipal by-laws).
- Traditional leaders have a prerogative to say no to the distribution of alcohol in rural areas.
- There should be zero tolerance for non-compliance with alcohol regulations.
- Ethical leadership should be instilled among the law enforcement officers who turn a blind eye or take bribes from lawbreakers.
- Review the by-laws to be in line with the new liquor regulations implemented by the ECLB in March 2025.
- The community (and not an individual) should be involved in the liquor licence approval process.
- The National Prosecuting Authority's role in determining the fines should be preventative. (This should be included in the national dialogue).
- An anonymous underage drinking hotline should be established.
- National harmonisation of all liquor laws to avoid discrepancies in the enforcement of regulations.
- Those who adhere to liquor regulations should be used as exemplars for those who do not comply.
- Rehabilitation should consider subsidising the rehabilitation of the victims of alcohol abuse.
- Decoy operations should be conducted so that liquor outlets that do not comply lose their licences.
- Learners should take it upon themselves to break the culture and curse of alcohol abuse in their families to change the narrative.



NMB Metro Police Commissioner, who contributed to the panel discussion

RESOLUTIONS AND CLOSING REMARKS

HOD Mrs Mama - DEDEAT



The HOD delivered closing remarks synthesising the summit's discussions and outlining concrete next steps.

- **Consensus on Execution:** The speaker observed that a common thread throughout the summit had been the critical need for **execution**. She reported unanimous agreement among participants that the focus must now shift decisively towards implementing the discussed strategies.
- **Key Themes and Partnerships:** Mrs Mama noted that practical cases for action had been presented, including starting a movement and establishing a social contract. The speaker expressed approval for the inclusion of civil society, especially faith-based organisations, towards the end of the proceedings. She emphasised that while partnerships were universally discussed, the crucial question remained: **how these partnerships would be translated into tangible actions and a concrete implementation plan**. The need for **enhanced awareness** was also highlighted as another common message.
- **Centrality of Behavioural Change:** Beyond legislation and regulations, the speaker stressed that a fundamental role for everyone involved was driving **behavioural change**. She underscored the importance of ethics and shifting mindsets, clarifying that this message was intended not just for learners present but for all attendees.

- **Call for Collective Responsibility:** The speaker reiterated the need to unite diverse stakeholders, specifically naming civil society, faith-based organisations, traditional leaders, industry representatives, and parents/guardians, referencing a point made about mentors for youth. She framed the core challenge as **parental responsibility** and posed a direct question to all attendees (grandparents, parents, aunts, older siblings over 18): "What are we taking home to change starting tonight?"

Concrete Action Plan and Commitments

- The speaker confirmed the mandate to circulate the summit report and develop a detailed implementation plan.
- The HOD highlighted a timely opportunity: the MEC's upcoming attendance at the National Liquor Council in one to two weeks. A recommendation from the DTIC (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition) to package the summit's outcomes would be acted upon.
- On behalf of the MEC Pieters and the Liquor board, the speaker committed that the Eastern Cape would be the first province, facilitated by the Liquor board, to table these packaged outcomes at the National Liquor Council, a platform noted as having been underutilised for a long time.
- She acknowledged the valuable practical examples and solutions contributed by young participants, pledging to incorporate these into the plan.
- **Accountability and Future Engagement:** The speaker emphasised the need for mutual accountability on the developed plan between the summit and the next major meeting anticipated in 2026. Addressing the chairperson and the board directly, she urged retaining the "beautiful, valuable partners" engaged at the summit, stating that the day's deliberations demonstrated a strong commitment from many to continue the journey together. The retention of partners was framed as essential.