

Alcohol ads ban 'only under discussion'

There are no definite plans to ban alcohol adverts but all options to curb alcohol abuse are being considered, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry Elizabeth Thabethe said on Thursday.



(Image: GCIS)

"Everything is still under discussion... these are possible actions," she told media on the sidelines of a liquor regulation conference in Midrand.

Thabethe said alcohol abuse in South Africa had reached a crisis, particularly among youth.

For this reason, alcohol advertising that glorified liquor consumption, particularly to young people, was not acceptable.

"It is not right to promote liquor as we are doing in South Africa. We'll continue to look at that if advertising companies don't comply or work with us."

Thabethe said advertising companies and liquor outlets needed to "come to the party".

"You must be responsible if you want to continue selling alcohol... we are saying work together with us."

Banning alcohol advertising a 'last last resort'

If this did not happen, then as a "last, last resort", the banning of alcohol advertising could be considered.

"We expect the industry to come on board and say this is what we can do (to self regulate)," Thabethe said.

McDonald Netshitenzhe, chief director of the policy and legislation unit, told delegates they should look at the problem of concurrent jurisdiction between national government and provinces.

At the moment, provinces were referring to the 1989 Act, while nationally, the Liquor Act 59 of 2003 applied.

Netshitenzhe said discussion was needed on ways to balance the effects of liquor abuse with the economic imperatives of the liquor industry.

Thabethe agrees with approach

"The dti believes in an approach that is inclusive and balanced. The principle is to listen to those that will be affected by the policy, understand the impact the present situation has on them and the proposed solution

desired that will still encapsulate both the objects of act 59."

She was referring to the objectives of reducing the socio-economic impact of alcohol abuse while promoting the development of a responsible, sustainable liquor industry.

"We need to find novel ways of mitigating the harm of alcohol abuse and still protect the rights of those of that chose the liquor industry as their trade," she said.

The conference was part of a consultative process to discuss resolutions taken at an anti-abuse summit held by the social development department last year.

From this, documents would be drawn up to put before the public for consultation. After this, a new policy framework to regulate the liquor industry, the National Liquor Policy, would be drawn up by 2012/13. This would work with the 2003 act.

The issues to be discussed included liquor outlet trading hours, the density of liquor outlets and proximity to schools, churches and main thoroughfares, and raising the legal drinking age.

A few hundred delegates were in attendance, representing the liquor industry, liquor manufacturers and distributors, provincial liquor boards, civil society organisations, non-government organisations, community based organisations and traditional leaders.

The department of trade and industry is responsible for regulating the liquor industry.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge