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MP's call to axe 'commo' grog laws

by DAVID BELL

LIBERAL MP Michael Sutherland has likened WA to communist East Germany for requiring sports clubs to hold liquor licences.

"Why does the local tennis club need to have a licence?" the Mt Lawley MP asked the *Voice*. "I've never seen a problem at a tennis club... this is like bloody East Germany.

"I've been serving beer since I was 12 years old and [yet] I can't go behind the bar because I haven't done a course in responsible liquor management."

The feisty big C conservative also reckons restaurants should be exempt.

"How many people do you see lying under the table at a Chinese restaurant?" he asks.

A lawyer in a previous life, he says his philosophy for law is you don't "create problems where there are no problems".

Mount Lawley Tennis Club bar manager Brian Evans agrees the rules are hard-going for local clubs.

A member for 40 years, he says the old days were "open slather". "We used to have a shed here with a big fridge full of king browns."

He'd visited a bowling club where the manager was off sick and the stand-in cost the club a \$2000 fine for not having a serving certificate.

WA preventative health expert Mike Daube, from the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, isn't keen on exempting sports clubs and restaurants from licensing.

"The prospect that you could sell alcohol without a licence, I think, would be catastrophic," he told the *Voice*.

"Alcohol causes massive social, health and community problems and the capacity to sell it is a privilege, not a right.

"If you take away the licence you take away any capacity for

you take away any capacity for controls, you take away any capacity to clamp down on inappropriate sales."

He says there are well-documented "problems with alcohol and sporting culture".

But Mr Sutherland insists "one should only hone in if there is a problem, not create some huge bureaucracy to police venues that do not need policing".

WA liquor licensing chief Barry Sargeant acknowledges clubs are not trouble hot spots but an eye is still kept on them.

"While the majority of clubs and restaurants are likely to be at the lower end of the 'risk scale' some of these premises can be problematic and may warrant compliance action," he said.

"While these issues may not always involve violence there may be other issues in relation to the manner in which they operate or comply with their licence conditions."