



HEALTH GROUPS' WARNING

Lack of fences for Skyworks alcohol zones' draws criticism

■ **Cathy O'Leary**
Medical Editor

Health groups have warned that so-called alcohol zones for Skyworks are confusing because they will not be fenced off.

They say Perth will be divided into two areas — a safe, alcohol-free area for families south of the river while the central city will have open zones where people can drink a bottle of wine in the two hours from 6.30pm.

Although there will be designated drinking areas in Kings Park and along most of the Esplanade, Perth City Council admits they will not be fenced off. But it says there will be strong police and security presence.

McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth director Mike Daube said he hoped the big police presence would deter most drinkers.

"But it seems an extraordinary waste of resources that the police now have to supervise a poorly defined area and even monitor the

number of bottles people have with them," he said.

"Surely asking people to manage without alcohol for a couple of hours isn't too hard to ask.

"The best advice for families is clearly to head for the South Perth foreshore."

The City of South Perth is using sponsorship from Healthway and Lotterywest to set up a 100,000sqm fenced smoke and alcohol-free zone on the foreshore at Sir James Mitchell Park.

Mayor James Best said two smaller alcohol and smoke-free zones last year had attracted more than 30,000 people.

Healthway chairwoman Rosanna Capolingua said reducing harm from excessive alcohol consumption was a priority health issue.

"Unfortunately, we have a culture in WA where many people seem to believe that you have to drink alcohol to have an enjoyable time," she said.

Australian Medical Association

WA president Dave Mountain warned people not let Australia Day morph into a celebration of binge drinking.

"The focus in recent years has been about how much alcohol can or can't be consumed during Skyworks which for many people was just an opportunity to get drunk and disorderly," he said.

"Premier Colin Barnett should shoulder some of the blame for this by allowing revellers to bring unnecessarily large amounts of alcohol into designated drinking zones this year," he said.

"Permitting individuals to turn up with six beers or pre-mix drinks or a bottle of wine to drink inside two hours is a recipe for disaster.

"Inevitably, thousands of young people will have had a skinful before they arrive at the designated drinking areas and knocking off another six beers or a bottle of red will leave many of them heavily intoxicated."

