

SCMP.COM

South China Morning Post

Underage drinking 'will not go away overnight', says rugby chief as teens flout laws at Hong Kong Sevens

PUBLISHED : Monday, 09 April, 2018, 11:57am

UPDATED : Monday, 09 April, 2018, 12:00pm

Sport > Rugby > HK Sevens

Chan Kin-wa kinwa.chan@scmp.com

Youngsters wanting to experiment with drinking alcohol is a common phenomenon, and seen every night outside 7-Elevens, says Hong Kong Rugby Union boss

Underage drinking remains a problem "that will not go away overnight" at the Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens.

Although organisers have clamped down with strict rules put in place by the government's Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), young fans were still able to access alcohol over the three-day event.

"I don't think this is an issue that will go away overnight," Hong Kong Rugby Union chief executive Robbie McRobbie said.

"Young people wanting to experiment drinking alcohol is a common phenomenon, we see it every night outside 7-Elevens around Hong Kong. So it's no great surprise we also have to face the challenges here at this event.



"There is no complacency with this," McRobbie said. "We are not pretending that there aren't still young people getting access to alcohol at the event. We will continue to make the efforts we have been doing.

"We feel we are doing the right things and it's just how we continue to do them and continue to pay attention to the issue. There is no magic solution.

"We are continuing to work with the stadium management, with the concession holders, with the police and with organisations like the KELY Support Group to, first of all, try minimising the opportunity for young people to get access to alcohol.

"If they are under the age of 18 and with the realisation that some of them are still finding a way to do it, KELY comes in to provide support for youngsters who do get access but find themselves needing some assistance."



According to the Stadia Regulation provided by the LCSD, which runs the 40,000-seat facility, no person shall sell any intoxicating liquors to any person under the age of 18 years and no person under the age of 18 years shall consume any intoxicating liquor.

The conditions of the temporary liquor licence issued under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance also state the licensees shall ensure no intoxicating liquor be sold to any person under 18 years of age and prominent signage with standard wordings shall be displayed.

A LCSD spokesperson said all vendors selling alcoholic drinks had been reminded to comply with all the regulations, while security guards were conducting age checks.

Security guards demanded HKID cards or passport identification for access to the notorious South Stand.



A staff member from one of the caterers, who identified herself as Ms Chan, said they were told by their supervisors to comply with the rules for selling alcohol, checking the HKID card of any suspicious youngster.

"We all understand it would be against the law if we sell alcohol to underage drinkers," said Chan, after just checking the ID card of a young customer. "She is just two months older than the required age limit and there is no problem.

"I have been working at the Sevens for over a decade and know well how these youngsters approach us. Many say they left their ID card at home. We have to tell them straight we cannot sell alcohol without proof of their age. I turned down five young customers on Friday as they failed to produce their ID cards.

"But some of these rejected customers turn to their older friends to help them buy. In that case, there is nothing we can do about it."

McRobbie questioned the responsibility of these people who bought alcohol for the minors. "It's difficult in that scenario as the main cause of the problem is an adult buying alcohol and giving to the minors," he said. "It's a moral issue and therefore it is difficult for us with our different partners to stop that."

Topics: Hong Kong Sevens

Source URL: <http://www.scmp.com/sport/rugby/hk-sevens/article/2140856/underage-drinking-will-not-go-away-overnight-says-rugby-chief>