

# Guidelines for Retailers

## (Victoria)

These guidelines have been written to assist retailers to sell solvents responsibly.

### Solvent abuse

Solvent abuse can be a serious problem in our community. Solvent abuse (or chroming) involves the inhalation of solvents (such as spray paints, gas lighter refills, thinners, petrol or glues) for the purpose of getting high. Sniffing solvents is not only harmful to mental and physical health, it is also potentially fatal. There have been 44 solvent abuse related deaths recorded in Victoria over the last decade. It is usually adolescents who sniff, sometimes as young as 10 years old.

Retailers have a responsibility as community members and by legislation to act responsibly with regard to the sale of solvents. The following guidelines have been developed by the Victorian Government in partnership with retailers.

### Which solvents?

Spray paints and gas lighter refills are the most commonly abused. However retailers should be on the alert for misuse of any solvents. Propellant based products and gas lighter refills pose risks in terms of the likelihood that a person can become unconscious and in some cases suffocate. The legislation (Sections 57 and 58 of the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act, 1981*) defines solvents as plastic solvent, adhesive

cement, cleaning agent, glue, nail polish remover, lighter fluid, gasoline or any other volatile product derived from petroleum, paint thinner, lacquer thinner, aerosol propellant or anaesthetic gas.

### Managing the responsible sale of solvents

The majority of customers purchase solvents for legitimate reasons. However, some people abuse solvents. The following steps provide a guide to managing the sale of solvents in your store:

- 1. Identify:** The potential products and how they are stored and displayed.
- 2. Display and storage:** Most solvents used for the purposes of inhaling are stolen rather than purchased so it is important that solvents are thoughtfully stored. You could:
  - Display solvents in sight of shop staff, near tills, on high shelves, under the counter or in locked display cabinets.
  - Use dummy containers for display purposes.
- 3. Training staff:** Let your staff know how to deal with customers who may abuse solvents. You may like to use the materials in this kit to provide an information session for staff.
- 4. Signage:** Display signs that indicate your support for the responsible sale of solvents and your right to refuse sales of solvents. (See the signs included with this kit.)

### Retailers' legal rights and responsibilities

#### *The law*

In Victoria it is an offence for a retailer to sell solvents to a person they reasonably believe intends to introduce it into their body or sell or supply it to another person for this purpose. This law is set down in Sections 57 and 58 of the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act, 1981*. The penalty is \$5,000, imprisonment of up to two years or both.

#### *Selling solvents to customers*

Under Victorian legislation, stores have the right not to sell solvents to particular customers. Additionally, retailers have the right to withdraw particular items from sale.

#### *Requesting an individual to leave your store*

A store manager has the right to ask any individual to leave the store, particularly if an individual appears to be behaving unusually or has been known to steal from the shop in the past.

Responsible sale  
of solvents