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**Individualised control of drinkers: back to the future?**

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*Abstract*

In recent years, there has been increasing resort in Anglophone countries to individualized control of drinkers.  Thus the Australian Northern Territory government has implemented legislation for electronically verifiable identification which must be checked against a banning list of adults prohibited from purchasing alcohol.  For another example, alcohol purchase banning orders were instituted in England and Wales by the Blair government.  The paper considers the earlier history of such individualized drinking controls, particularly in the alcohol control regimes of the 1920s-1960s which succeeded prohibition regimes or were set up in response to prohibition movements.  Questions addressed include what were the rationales of such individualised controls, how were they enforced, why were they largely abandoned, and what evidence is available on their effects. The present-day resurgence of individualised controls is interpreted as the path of least resistance for politicians needing to be seen to do something about alcohol problems without substantially impinging on the alcohol market.