

24 August 2015

Senator Sam Dastyari
Chair
Senate Standing Committee on Economics
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Dastyari

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO PERSONAL CHOICE AND COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the *Inquiry into personal choice and community impacts: an inquiry into measures introduced to restrict personal choice 'for the individual's own good'* (Inquiry). The comments in this letter are in relation to the second terms of reference only (the sale and service of alcohol). These comments are provided by the Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol (QCAA) in support of the submission prepared by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) to the Inquiry.

Alcohol is no ordinary product, it is a drug that:

- has a depressive effect on the central nervous system
- is an addictive substance
- is a known carcinogen
- is a known cause of birth defects
- is a known cause or component in more than 200 diseases including strokes, ischaemic heart disease, cancers, liver cirrhosis, respiratory diseases and sexually transmitted infections
- is associated with comorbidity or co-occurrence with mental health disorders¹
- is a significant contributor to family violence and child maltreatment²
- is second only to tobacco as a leading preventable cause of death and hospitalisations in Australia.^{3,4}

Unfortunately, alcohol is often promoted and sold without due consideration to the harms that it causes.⁵ The alcohol industry like to perpetuate the myth that alcohol is a normal, everyday product by linking it to sporting events and sporting personalities, through sponsorship of cultural events and festivals, promoting alcohol as part of national celebrations such as ANZAC Day and Australia Day, and promoting the idea that alcohol should be consumed every day as a reward, as relaxation and for no reason in particular.^{6,7}

Alcohol is also more available and affordable than it has been over the past ten to 15 years.⁸ This is particularly due to the application of Competition Policy Principles to alcohol regulations across Australia. During this time the harms from alcohol have increased, while the overall per-capita consumption of alcohol across the population has remained stable.⁹

In 2014, Alcohol's Burden of Disease showed that in the ten years from 2000 to 2010, alcohol-related deaths increased by 62 per cent and alcohol-related hospitalisations doubled from 76,467 to 157,132.¹⁰ Presented another way, 15 people die and 430 are hospitalised due to alcohol each day, making the reduction of alcohol harms one of Australia's greatest preventive health challenges.¹¹

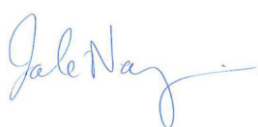
Alongside these harms to the individual drinker, alcohol also results in harms to others including acts of violence, road traffic accidents, child maltreatment and neglect. Almost 30,000 incidents of alcohol-related domestic violence are reported to police a year, and that's just in the states and territories where this data is available. More than one million children are affected in some way by others' drinking.¹²

Alcohol harms are estimated to be \$36 billion annually in Australia. These include crime, injury, lifelong disability, family and domestic violence, child abuse, property damage, foregone taxes, productivity reductions and intangible costs to individuals, families and companies.¹³

QCAA therefore recognises that because of the harm that alcohol causes and its potential to cause harm, regulation is an appropriate part of Australia's response to managing alcohol.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these important issues with you.

Yours sincerely



Professor Jake Najman

Chair

Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol

-
- ¹ World Health Organization (WHO). (2014). *Global status report on alcohol and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/en/
 - ² Laslett, AM., Mugavin, J., Jiang, H., Manton, E., Callinan, S., MacLean, S., and Room, R. (2015). *The hidden harm: Alcohol's impact on children and families*. Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.
 - ³ Gao, C., Ogeil, R., and Lloyd, B. (2014). *Alcohol's burden of disease in Australia*. Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education and VicHealth in collaboration with Turning Point.
 - ⁴ Babor et al. (2010). *Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. Research and Public Policy Second Edition*. Oxford University Press.
 - ⁵ Roche, A., Bywood, P., Freeman, T., Pidd, K., Borlagdan, J. and Trifonoff, A. (2009). *The social context of alcohol use in Australia*. Adelaide: National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction.
 - ⁶ Babor et al. (2010). *Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. Research and Public Policy Second Edition*. Oxford University Press.
 - ⁷ Moodie, R., Daube, M., Carnell, K., Connors, C., Larkin, S., Roberts, L., Segal, L., Selvey, L. and Zimmet, P. (2009). *Australia: The healthiest nation by 2020. Technical Report 3: Preventing alcohol-related harms in Australia: A window of opportunity*. Prepared for the National Preventative Health Taskforce.
 - ⁸ Marsden Jacob Associates. (2005). *Identifying a framework for regulation in packaged liquor retailing*. Report prepared for the National Competition Council as part of the NCC Occasional Series, Melbourne.
 - ⁹ Livingston, M. (2015). *Understanding recent trends in Australian alcohol consumption*. Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.
 - ¹⁰ Gao, C., Ogeil, R., and Lloyd, B. (2014). *Alcohol's burden of disease in Australia*. Canberra: FARE and VicHealth in collaboration with Turning Point.
 - ¹¹ Gao, C., Ogeil, R., and Lloyd, B. (2014). *Alcohol's burden of disease in Australia*. Canberra: FARE and VicHealth in collaboration with Turning Point.
 - ¹² Laslett, AM., Mugavin, J., Jiang, H., Manton, E., Callinan, S., MacLean, S., & Room, R. (2015). *The hidden harm: Alcohol's impact on children and families*. Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.

¹³ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE). (2011). *About alcohol's \$36 billion cost*. Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education. <http://www.fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/research/36-Billion.pdf>