



Media Release



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ISSUE: POINT-OF-SALE ALCOHOL PROMOTIONS SHOULD BE BANNED!

["Permissibility, availability and accessibility - all increase consumption." Dalgarno Institute.]

A spokesperson for Dalgarno Institute, a member of NAAA, welcomed the release of the Alcohol Advertising Review Board Report for 2014 and the convening of a Forum to explore the wider issues of Alcohol Marketing to young people at Parliament House in Canberra yesterday. Shane Varcoe commented that *"While awareness within the industry is growing, the voluntary self-regulatory approach has failed to significantly change the attitude of the alcohol industry and to modify their advertising practices particularly targeted at vulnerable groups such as indigenous people, young people and young mothers."*

One of NAAA's stated tasks has been to prioritise a cultural change that will reduce alcohol harm and improve the health of Australians. The focus has been in three key areas: Alcohol pricing and taxation; alcohol marketing and promotion; reassessing policies related to alcohol availability.

Mr Varcoe said that whilst these are good strategies, the NAAA could go further, needing to better utilise the impact of these tactics by creating a new narrative around the acceptance of alcohol as being a necessary component of 'normal' socialisation and celebration. This means that instead of relying on Governments and the industry to make changes, bodies such as the NAAA is/could take a leadership role in investing in the creation of better health and social narrative that challenges these attitudes and create an environment more conducive to regulatory change.

Other 'top-down' approaches such as increasing the age at which alcohol can be purchased from 18 to 21, the restriction of hotel and club trading hours and introduction of lock outs and enforcement of drinking codes will help the community craft this better narrative. This has also been seen with interventions such as Random Breath Testing (RBT) which has significantly reduced alcohol related traffic morbidity and mortality, whilst helping establish a new cultural attitude to drinking whilst out.

"These legislative changes, do compel people to behave differently, and challenge accepted norms, but it is still personal and social attitudes that will better craft the new narrative of amenity that doesn't necessarily have to have alcohol as the central or key component," said Mr Varcoe. *"This legislation assisted new 'narrative' could be a real key to making the alcohol industry take a more responsible attitude and for Governments to find the courage to enforce these changes"*

He also commented on other urgently needed targeted tactics to reduce harm: *"Surveys show that the number of young people drinking has declined however abuse of alcohol by a vulnerable minority posed very significant problems for the community".* He added: *"Education campaigns should be more targeted toward indigenous peoples where very high rates of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Syndrome had reached tragic levels in some communities effectively impacting on the next generation of indigenous people; young mothers who were often lonely and emotionally/socially vulnerable, often finding comfort in hazardous alcohol use that they believe was not harmful; and young people who were at risk of brain damage through binge drinking. He also said that the most effective way for Governments to have an immediate impact to reduce alcohol abuse and harm among these groups was to ban point of sale 'two for one' type promotions and shopping docket vouchers for alcohol products. These marketing approaches were specifically designed to attract these three very vulnerable groups and need to be acted on as a matter of urgency."*

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