

**Response to the Report by the
WA Education and Standing Committee**

Alcohol: Reducing the harm and curbing the culture of excess

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Alcohol: Reducing the harm and curbing the culture of excess

ADCA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the report by the WA Education and Standing Committee *Alcohol: Reducing the harm and Curbing the Culture of Excess*. ADCA is the national peak body representing the interests of the Australian non-government sector for alcohol and other drugs. It works collaboratively with the government, non-government, business and community sectors to promote evidence-based, socially just approaches aimed at preventing or reducing the health, economic and social harm caused by alcohol and other drugs to individuals, families, communities and the nation.

The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) is the state based peak body. Both ADCA and WANADA contributed to the consultation process in the development of the Standing Committee's report.

The Committee should be congratulated for its report *Alcohol: Reducing the harm and curbing the culture of excess*. It is a thorough document that clearly identifies its priorities and makes comprehensive and wide ranging recommendations against these. The breadth of the consultation process should be acknowledged, with recognition for the extent to which the Committee sought a wide range of views across a broad spectrum of the Australian community and overseas.

With over 3000 deaths and 70000 hospitalisations annually across Australia, the costs of harmful alcohol consumption are high. The report by the Standing Committee addresses the broad range of issues necessary to make a serious attempt at changing Australia's drinking culture. ADCA agrees with the report's priorities of accessibility, advertising and affordability.

The Report makes a significant number of recommendations across an impressive range of issues that will inform and/or will complement the work being done or proposed at a national level by the Australian National Preventative Health Agency and the Standing Committee on Alcohol of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs. The National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA), an organisation represented by over 55 bodies with an interest in the impact of alcohol on health, also shares the key priorities identified in this report. Established in 2010, NAAA is working to reduce the harms of problematic alcohol consumption by achieving change around the issues of pricing and taxation, access and availability, and advertising and promotion. The challenge for this Report will be in acceptance and implementation of the recommendations to achieve real change.

ADCA particularly supports the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The State Government adopt a goal of lowering the annual per capita consumption of pure alcohol in Western Australia over the next four years from 12.45 litres to under 10 litres per capita. In its annual report the Drug and Alcohol Office provide details of the State's annual per capita consumption of alcohol and the progress in reaching this goal.

Recommendation 5

The Minister for Mental Health and the Minister for Racing and Gaming provide to Parliament an annual report on the results of the collection and analysis of the previous year's Western Australian alcohol consumption data.

ADCA's view is that such data should be collected by all states and territories in a consistent manner.

Recommendation 6

The Minister for Racing and Gaming table in Parliament by December 2011 draft amendments to the Liquor Control Act 1988 to make 'protecting and improving public health' the primary object of the Act.

Recommendation 23

The Minister for Racing and Gaming and the Minister for Planning table in Parliament by December 2011 amendments to the Liquor Control Act 1988 which consider the public health impact of any further increase in liquor outlets, and include a codification system for future outlet density requirements for the planning policies of the State's local government authorities.

Access and availability are key priorities for ADCA and should be part of a national strategy to reduce harm from alcohol consumption.

Recommendation 28

The Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health write to their counterparts in other States recommending that the Federal Government implement the 2009 Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy recommendations relating to the phasing out of alcohol promotions from times and placements with high exposure to young people up to 25 years of age.

Recommendation 29

The Minister for Racing and Gaming table in Parliament by December 2011 amendments to the Liquor Control Act 1988 to further limit alcohol advertising in Western Australia:

- *outside and inside liquor outlets*
- *through printed material distributed in letter boxes*
- *through outdoor advertisements*
- *inside sporting venues, and*
- *through newspapers and other publications printed and distributed in Western Australia.*

Restrictions on alcohol advertising are relevant to all States and Territories. ADCA sees this as an opportunity for the WA Government to take leadership on this issue.

Recommendation 31

The Premier report to Parliament by December 2011 on the efforts of the State Government's lobbying of the Federal Government to fund and implement a national approach to replace the sponsorship of sporting bodies by alcohol companies.

ADCA recommends that the WA Government continue to advocate for a national approach on removing alcohol sponsorship of sporting bodies and activities.

Recommendation 33

In the absence of Federal Government action, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Racing and Gaming table in Parliament by June 2012 amendments to the Liquor Control Act 1988 to phase out the sponsorship of sporting bodies in Western Australia by alcohol companies.

Recommendation 35

The Premier report to Parliament by December 2011 on the efforts of the State Government's lobbying of the Federal Government to implement the recommendations of the Australia and New

Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council's review relating to the national introduction of a health message warning on the labels of all alcohol products.

Recommendation 36

In the absence of Federal Government regulation, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Racing and Gaming table in Parliament by June 2012 amendments to the Liquor Control Act 1988 to introduce a system of health message labelling on alcohol products produced in Western Australia.

ADCA recommends that the WA Government continue to lobby the Federal Government to implement the recommendations of the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council's review relating to the national introduction of a health message warning on the labels of all alcohol products.

Recommendation 37

The Minister for Racing and Gaming table in Parliament by December 2011 amendments to the Liquor Control Act 1988 making it a condition of liquor licences for drinking glasses to include an indication of the number of standard drinks.

Recommendation 40

The Premier urgently negotiate with the Federal Government to increase taxes on alcohol products by introducing a tiered volumetric tax in addition to a minimum retail price per standard drink.

Recommendation 42

The Minister for Education ensure that drug and alcohol education becomes a mandatory part of the curriculum in all schools, and that schools are encouraged to engage with the School Drug Education and Road Aware program.

ADCA recommends that the WA Government lobby for mandatory inclusion of drug and alcohol education as part of the curriculum in all schools.

Recommendation 44

The Minister for Child Protection substantially increase funding to youth service organisations in the 2012-13 budget to increase the provision of diversionary, early intervention and positive lifestyle strategies targeted at young people at risk of drug and alcohol problems.

Recommendation 54

The Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health should provide funds for the development of a training package for all health practitioners on the effectiveness and implementation of brief interventions to decrease alcohol consumption for those drinking above NHMRC recommended guidelines. The Ministers should encourage the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Nursing Federation and other relevant health care organisations and practitioners to advocate for this practice with their members.

Recommendation 55

The Minister for Mental Health monitor the effectiveness of the increased funding in the 2011-12 State Budget to non-government organisations offering alcohol treatment programs, and ensure that funding agreements are for periods longer than three years to reduce the uncertainty within that sector.

ADCA applauds the Committee for addressing the need for funding sustainability for AOD services.

Recommendation 57

The Minister for Mental Health and the Minister for Corrective Services should, as a matter of urgency, fund in the 2012-13 budget the development of a State-wide alcohol diversion program. This program should be offered during the pre-sentence process to all offenders convicted of an offence where alcohol is a contributing factor. Where these offenders are sentenced to prison, it should be a mandatory program.

Alcohol diversion programs recognise the effectiveness of health and social approaches to reducing the harm addressing from alcohol.

Recommendation 58

The Minister of Corrective Services and the Minister for Mental Health increase funding in the 2012-13 budget to ensure that every prisoner who is identified and assessed as needing an alcohol or drug treatment program is able to receive one, irrespective of which prison they are held in.

The prison population is a particularly disadvantaged group and therefore need access to treatment programs and support in addressing their alcohol use.

Recommendation 59

The Minister of Corrective Services and the Minister for Mental Health allocate funding in the 2012-13 budget to ensure that every prisoner counselled or treated in prisons for alcohol or drug problems continues to be treated on discharge from prison. This counselling or treatment to be part of any parole or release conditions for prisoners and, wherever possible, be delivered by the same health care professional on a monthly basis for a minimum of three months.

Ongoing treatment following release from prison shows a genuine commitment by the government to supporting this group.

Recommendation 60

The Minister for Mental Health significantly increase funding in the 2012-13 budget to the alcohol and drug community treatment sector to increase its capacity and expand the number of places for clients referred by the Department of Corrective Services.

I would be pleased to discuss ADCA's response in more detail. Please contact Meredythe Crane at meredythe.crane@adca.org.au or on 02 6215 9808.

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