

23 November 2017

Senator Barry O'Sullivan
Senator for Queensland
Chair of Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Deputy Chair of Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 3135
Toowoomba QLD 4350

By email: senator.o'sullivan@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you with regards your role on the Senate Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations. In particular the oral evidence provided to the Committee on 6 November 2017.

ABA is the peak body representing the many industry manufacturers, distributors and retailers that operate legally and responsibly across Australia. Our role is to help organise a balanced management of alcohol regulation to provide the stability and certainty we need to drive growth and investment across our industry-while at the same time acknowledging and working with all stakeholders to minimise the harms associated with alcohol misuse.

ABA encourages broad participation in public debate. However, regardless of the participant it is imperative the debate be informed only by verifiable fact. This was alarmingly not the case on 6 November 2017 and to this concern I provide the information below to clarify much that was erroneously presented to the Committee.

False: *Over one million casks of wine are sold in Alice Springs each year.*

Fact: There is no evidence to support this claim. On the contrary, the evidence shows this claim is incorrect. From a simple search on Google, the following take-away liquor outlets were identified in Alice Springs, each of which were contacted to verify if they sold cask wine:

Organisation	Status
BWS (Hartley Street, Alice Springs)	Do not sell cask wine.
LiquorLand (Railway Terrace, Alice Springs)	Do not sell cask wine.
The Gap View Hotel (Gap Road, Alice Springs)	Only after 6pm, max one per person.
Cellarbrations (Flynn Drive, Alice Springs)	Do not sell cask wine.
Cellarbrations (Milner Road, Alice Springs)	Do not sell cask wine.
Cellarbrations (Hearne Place, Alice Springs)	Do not sell cask wine.
Heavi Tree Gap Supermarket (Palm Circuit, Alice Springs)	Do not sell cask wine.
Todd Tavern (Todd Street, Alice Springs)	Only after 6pm, max one per person.

There is no verifiable evidence to support this statement and the facts indicate the information is not reliable, as such it should not be taken into consideration in the Inquiry.



False: *There has been a short period of modest decline in alcohol consumption in Australia (*with an increase in 2016).*

Fact: The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Apparent Consumption of Alcohol shows that in Australia apparent per capita alcohol consumption peaked in 1974-75 at 13.09 litres. In 2014-15 the ABS recorded the apparent consumption of alcohol at 9.52 litres per capita. This represents a 27.3% decrease in per capita consumption.

A decline of this magnitude can hardly be categorised as “moderate”. Instead there has been a systematic change in the amount of alcohol that Australians have been drinking over three decades. This fact cannot be ignored when it comes to considering the modern Australian drinking patterns.

*This is correct, apparent consumption between 2014-15 to 2015-16 did increase slightly from 9.52 litres to 9.70 litres. However what was not explained to your inquiry was that is a minor increase, which remains well in line with the long term downward trajectory.

False: *AIHW data reports on limited trends.*

Fact: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s (AIHW), is a federal government agency that undertakes the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) once every three years. The NDSHS is a comprehensive report on nearly 24,000 Australians’ use of – and attitudes toward – alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs.

These results are widely accepted as the most comprehensive and independent measure of these issues available.

- The most recent iteration of the NDSHS in 2016 showed that 83% of Australians are either drinking in moderation or abstaining from alcohol altogether.
- The NDSHS also found that the proportion of Australians exceeding the National Health and Medical Research Council’s drinking guidelines decreased. In fact, the proportion exceeding the lifetime risk guidelines declined between 2013 and 2016 from 18.2% to 17.1%.
- The NDSHS has also shown a continual decline in the frequency of alcohol consumption amongst Australians. In 2001 8.3% of Australians consumed alcohol daily. This figure has steadily declined over the last 15 years, with only 5.9% of Australians consuming alcohol daily in 2016.

The NDSHS data showing both a decline in the frequency of alcohol consumption coupled with a decrease in the number of people who exceed the lifetime risk guidelines indicates that Australians are aware the issues associated with excessive alcohol consumption. They are actively changing their behaviour resulting in the clear majority of Australians consuming alcohol in moderation. This is supported by the fact that according to the 2016 NDSHS, one in two recent drinkers has undertaken moderating behaviour such as reducing the number of days they drank.

While the NHDS is self-reporting, it should not be a reason to dismiss the findings. Instead, when coupled with the ABS data that has shown a downward trajectory in alcohol consumption over the past 4 decades, it is clear that Australian’s attitudes towards alcohol have shifted and that the majority of Australian’s drink alcohol responsibly.



False: *There are practically no public awareness campaigns for alcohol in Australia.*

Facts: DrinkWise, which is funded by the industry, has delivered numerous major campaigns promoting responsible drinking and targeting what the evidence continues to identify as the two key drivers of underage drinking – parental drinking behaviour and peer group norms.

Some examples of these campaigns and initiatives include:

- *Kids Absorb Your Drinking* (partnered with government) - It took the form of national wide television advertisements. It was supported by online material for parents. The advertisements showed a father asking his son to fetch a beer for his father. The son morphs into an adult while fetching the beer and in turn asks his son to fetch him a beer. The eighteen month campaign represented a total investment of \$8 million.
- *Alcohol and Kid's Don't Mix* – a campaign launched to encourage parents to delay their child's introduction to alcohol. A range of tools were developed to help parents
- *How to Drink Properly* - an Australian-first social marketing campaign designed to influence young adults (18-24 years) to drink responsibly - by moderating the intensity and frequency of binge drinking occasions. Built around a series of animated online videos, the campaign features a suave, classy and confident character who bestows cheeky words of wisdom upon 'amateur' drinkers.
- *You Won't Miss a Moment if You DrinkWise* - a collaborative approach to conveying a unified moderation message which encourages sports fans, music lovers and festival-goers to drink responsibly and ensure they don't miss the most memorable moments of an event. The initiative, targeting event attendees and those watching telecasts, has been seen and heard across AFL and NRL finals as well as the Spring Racing Carnival, Australian Open Tennis, Surfing Australia events and the 2015 World Cup of Cricket.

Should the Committee require further details of the work of DrinkWise including these campaigns, we encourage contact with DrinkWise.

Some have attempted to discredit the work of DrinkWise by suggesting that as an industry association, it is used by the industry to prevent policy interventions. It should be noted that the community directors, whose role it is to steer the direction of DrinkWise, includes a diverse, well respected membership, including:

- Neil Comrie AO APM (Chair of the DrinkWise Board of Directors) – Former Chief Commissioner of the Victoria Police.
- Prof Richard Smallwood AO – Former Chief Medical Officer of Australia and past Chair of the National Health and Medical Research Council.
- Hon Rob Knowles AO – Former Victorian Health Minister.
- Prof Niki Ellis OAM –Former President of the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.
- Terry Slater AM MAICD – Former Head of the Health Advancement Division in the Federal Department of Health.
- Hon Amanda Vanstone – Former Federal Minister.
- Paul Sheahan AM – Former Headmaster of Melbourne Grammar School and former President MCC.



With seven of the 13 DrinkWise Board of Directors being the Community Directors, including the Chair, it is clear that DrinkWise is a balanced organisation with a board who have the expertise and experience to ensure DrinkWise is operating in the best interests of the Australian public.

The issues outlined above form a pattern of misinformation which has the capacity to complicate and misdirect the Committees important investigative work and I urge you to consider very closely the reliability of witnesses that have provided it.

I hope that this information will be a useful clarification of fact regarding some of the alcohol issues in Australia and I would welcome any opportunity to provide information to your process if it is required.

Your team is welcome to contact me at [REDACTED]
or on [REDACTED] with any queries about the issues raised in this letter.

For your information I have also written in similar terms to all members of the Committee.

Yours Sincerely,

Fergus Taylor
Executive Director
Alcohol Beverages Australia

