



**DrinkWise**Australia  
Moderation is always in good taste

DrinkWise  
Australia Ltd

Level 1, 34  
Queen Street

Melbourne VIC  
3000

**Tel:** 613 99354700

**Fax:** 613 99354777

**[www.drinkwise.com.au](http://www.drinkwise.com.au)**

ABN 46 112 783 114

**This submission to the Senate Committee of Inquiry into the Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007 is made on behalf of DrinkWise Australia ACN 112 783 114.**

## **Introduction**

DrinkWise commends the Senate's decision to enquire into the reduction of alcohol related harm, and, in particular, the stated aim of inculcating a culture of responsible drinking in Australia which matches our own organisational mission.

## **About DrinkWise**

DrinkWise came into being in 2005 with a mission to create a more responsible drinking culture in Australia in which the benefits of responsible drinking are maintained while the harms that flow from irresponsible drinking are minimised.

DrinkWise is different, because we take a long term approach and aim to achieve a fundamental change in our drinking culture, by focusing in a sustained way on the drivers behind irresponsible drinking and acting on the basis of evidence.

DrinkWise's industry links also make us unique, and place us in a strong position to influence and engage the alcohol industry as a key stakeholder in the path to a better drinking culture. DrinkWise is principally funded through a self-imposed levy by a number of Australian alcohol producers. DrinkWise has also received funding from the Australian Government.

The Strategic aims of the organisation are to reduce the levels of intoxication and drunkenness (thereby reducing per occasion consumption) and to increase the intolerance of intoxication and drunkenness in Australian society.

To achieve these aims it is necessary that:

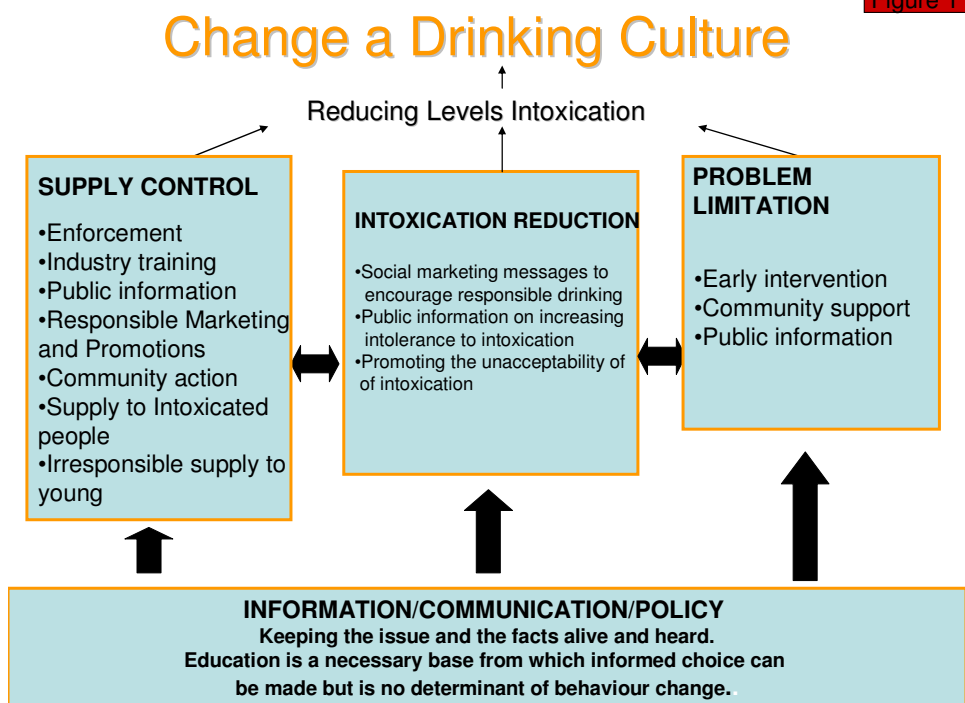
- Individuals and communities accept that they have a role to play in changing their attitudes towards and behaviour with alcohol;
- New approaches will be tried with an increased focus on acute problems, social harm and disability (and less emphasis on total consumption and chronic disease);
- The alcohol and hospitality industries (including retailers) will need to market their products in ways that do not encourage societal tolerance for intoxication and drunkenness; and
- The hospitality industry will need to continue to strengthen and maintain the responsible service of alcohol and look at innovative means to enhance responsible service of alcohol.

The Board of DrinkWise comprises equal representation from the alcohol industry and the community, with an independent Chair (currently, the Hon. Patricia Worth). Board members are drawn from the alcohol manufacturing, retail and hospitality sectors, health, law enforcement, youth affairs and social marketing. The organisation's strategic plan is included in Attachment A.

DrinkWise’s position on creating a culture of responsible drinking is premised on the understanding that alcohol is an ingrained part of Australian society and a product that is consumed by more than 80% of the population. The per capita consumption in Australia steadily declined from the late 1980s until the early 1990s when consumption began to fluctuate (National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2009). However, per capita consumption is a poor measure of the likely outcome of excessive drinking and to a large extent the drinking patterns of people under the age of 29 years present the greatest risk of acute alcohol related harm. It is not the drinking but the way we are drinking which lies at the heart of the burden Australian society is experiencing as a result of excessive use of alcohol. DrinkWise believes that a coordinated and whole of community approach is required to effect real change in creating a more responsible culture of drinking and reducing alcohol related harms. In addition, any approach must be viewed as a long term, generational project.

Information, communication and policy are all important issues to consider when aiming to change Australia’s drinking culture, but any approach should be driven by three key elements: responsible supply, intoxication reduction and problem limitation. Examples of such strategies are given in figure 1, but they are by no means exhaustive.

Figure 1



DrinkWise recognises there are many other organisations, including Governments, non-government bodies and individuals engaged in seeking to reduce alcohol-related harm. DrinkWise can not coordinate all the necessary elements to achieve a culture change but has focused on those areas where it believes it can make a unique contribution and make a difference. To this end, DrinkWise has commissioned a number of research projects to inform itself on the best approaches to take.

Two such studies currently being finalised are a comprehensive review of the cultural drivers influencing young peoples drinking, commissioned by DrinkWise. The second study is a qualitative survey on the attitudes and behaviour of young people and their parents towards alcohol. We believe both these studies will greatly enhance the Senate’s understanding of the issues around alcohol use and misuse in Australia and we would like to share these finding with the Committee. The publication of these two reports is not expected before early April and, hence, we seek leave of the Senate Committee to provide a supplementary submission at this time. This supplementary submission will highlight the best available evidence and suggest some further and more productive areas for the Senate to explore.

DrinkWise has embarked on a major social marketing campaign aimed at changing the attitudes and behaviour of adults toward alcohol and, in particular, the parents of young children. This approach seeks to create a generational change in the attitudes and behaviour of the next generation of drinkers while engaging and supporting parents.

To emphasise the point made earlier, creating a safe and enjoyable drinking culture in Australia requires a long-term coordinated, whole of community and comprehensive approach.

### **The Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007**

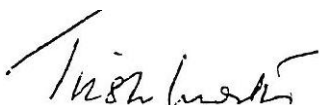
The aim of the Bill is to create a culture of responsible drinking and to facilitate a reduction in the alcohol toll. Whilst the elements of the Bill are worthy of consideration, they are unlikely to be effective in changing Australia's drinking the culture.

In order to achieve genuine change, a more holistic and integrated examination of alcohol and its role in Australian society is required. Advertising has a role to play in how alcohol is perceived in Australia, but it is only one element of a complex issue. If the purpose of the Parliament is truly about changing the culture of drinking and reducing alcohol related harms, other issues, such as enforcement, information provision, supply and host responsibility training are also worthy of consideration.

The Bill in its current form will be ineffective in achieving its stated purpose, namely, to create a culture of responsible drinking and facilitate a reduction in the alcohol toll.

The economic cost of alcohol to Australian society now exceeds \$15 billion per annum (Collins and Lapsley in press). What can never be adequately measured is the emotional cost to families and the community through alcohol related injury and death. It is appropriate that the Senate consider these issues, and recommend strategies which can achieve real change.

The Hon. Patricia Worth



**Chair  
DrinkWise Australia**

Dr Mike MacAvoy



**Chief Executive Officer  
DrinkWise Australia**