



VICTORIAN ALCOHOL AND DRUG ASSOCIATION

VICTORIAN ALCOHOL AND DRUG ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION

SUBMISSION SENATE INQUIRY FOR ALCOHOL TOLL REDUCTION
BILL 2007

March 2008

Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association

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The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) is the peak body for alcohol and other drug (AOD) services in Victoria. We provide advocacy, leadership, information and representation on AOD issues both within and beyond the AOD sector.

VAADA's membership comprises agencies working in the AOD field, as well as those individuals who are involved in, or have a specific interest in, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, or research that minimises the harms caused by alcohol and other drugs.

As a state-wide peak organisation, VAADA has a broad constituency. Our membership and stakeholders include 'drug specific' organisations, consumer advocacy organisations, hospitals, community health centres, primary health organisations, disability services, religious services, general youth services, local government and others, as well as interested individuals.

VAADA's Board is elected from the membership and comprises a range of expertise in the provision and management of alcohol and other drug services and related services.

As a peak organisation, VAADA's purpose is to ensure that the issues for both people experiencing the harms associated with alcohol and other drug use, and the organisations that support them, are well represented in policy, program development, and public discussion



Our Views

This submission broadly endorses the views expressed in the submission made by the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) which is the national peak body for the Australian alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector.

In our experience and that of our member agencies, the issues associated with binge drinking and alcohol misuse have become a significant local and national problem. Many of our agencies have a growing concern with the misuse and dangers of alcohol. We consider it appropriate that there be a greater national and local focus on the harms arising from alcohol misuse. However, this focus needs to go beyond focussing solely on youth and teenage drinking, but consider broader cultural questions of alcohol consumption across Australian Society and its impact in social, economic, and health terms.

An Overview of VAADA's response

This Inquiry and any that may immediately follow provides a great opportunity for government and the broader community to take stock of the present day impact that alcohol is having on Australian society. The opportunity should be taken to assess the ways and means by which the clearly obvious and deleterious effects of alcohol misuse can be minimised and reduced.

In Brief VAADA supports:

Limits on the way alcohol is advertised and marketed and sold to young people.

The current system of self-regulation is not working. Alcohol is a dangerous product, its advertising needs to be restricted if not banned as has occurred with Tobacco. There is a need for improvements in the manner in which alcohol is sold and supplied generally, and especially how it is marketed to young people.

Health information labels on all alcohol products.

Consumers need to be informed of the health and social dangers associated with alcohol misuse. Labelling and messaging on alcohol products should be rotated.

Better Identification of the number of standard drinks in a product

It is a consumers right to know the number of standard drinks associated with a product they have purchased. This is particularly important given the growing variety and styles of pre mixed drinks which are appearing in the market.

Education Programs

There is an obvious need for improved and broader education programs about the social and health dangers associated with alcohol misuse.



Taxation

Consideration should be given to differential taxation as a tool to reduce harms associated with alcohol misuse

Improved Treatment and Rehabilitation Services

The capacity of existing treatment service needs to be increased. There is a serious need for increased financial support to assist with capacity issues and workforce development.

Establish a comprehensive system of data collection on alcohol sales, consumption patterns and resultant social harms.

A comprehensive national system for the collation of data on alcohol sales, consumption or derived harms does not exist in Australia. It is a matter of urgency that such an essential and basic of tools should be established. While it may not be directly within the scope of the present inquiry the obvious benefits derived from such data in terms of targets and planning are obvious.

Concluding Remarks

The use of alcohol in Australian society is widespread. It's impact on particular segments of our community is becoming increasingly apparent. The present inquiry provides an important opportunity to take stock of present problems and scope some possible actions which aim to reduce negative impacts both in health social and economic terms. Aspects of the 'Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007' provide an opportunity to address some of these aspects. The VAADA submission has addressed some of these concerns as well as a number of associated issues which should also be taken into consideration if we are to effect positive social change around the harms associated with alcohol misuse.