

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Mr. Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
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Dear Mr Humphery,

On behalf of the Confederation of Australian Sport (CAS), I would ask you to please accept this submission to the Federal Senate Inquiry into the Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007 submitted by CAS on behalf of our members, primarily National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) of Australia. A number of National Sporting Organisations, including members of the Coalition of Major Professional Sports (COMPS) have independently provided submissions as well and CAS fully supports the ideas and submissions of these organisations on this important subject.

As the peak body for sport, CAS's membership base represents Australia's National Sporting Organisations, Collectively, NSO's represent approximately five million sport playing Australians. Our members also include a number of other organisations associated with the sport industry. Through the promotion of participation in sport and physical activity, CAS aims:

- to improve the health and well-being of individual Australians; and
- to maximise the sport and leisure industry's contribution to the Australian economy.

CAS has over twenty years experience with political, economic, industrial and social developments in sport. It is the voice of the sport sector and plays a leading role in the development of sport in Australia.

I would like to thank the Committee for considering the submission by CAS. At an appropriate time CAS are prepared to provide expert representatives who can speak further to the matters contained within this submission at any hearings, if required. We look forward to further dialogue on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Lachlan Clark
General Manager
Confederation of Australian Sport

CAS is proudly supported by:



Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007 Senate Inquiry

Submission prepared by the



**Prepared By
Lachlan Clark
General Manager
Confederation of Australian Sport**

Summary

The submission addresses the role of Sporting groups and associations in Australia in relation to the stated aim of the Bill to create a culture of responsible drinking, and to facilitate a reduction in the alcohol toll resulting from excessive alcohol consumption.

CAS asserts that sporting clubs can be a powerful force for change in our society as sporting clubs provide the opportunity for approximately five million Australians to live an active, healthy lifestyle and provide many benefits towards a cohesive society.

CAS believes that in order to create a culture of responsible drinking, the Government should provide funds to assist sporting clubs change member's behaviours. CAS is of the opinion that incentives and education are a far better method of achieving real change rather than penalties and prohibition such as suggested by two aims of the Bill, specifically;

- Restrict TV and radio alcohol advertising to after 9pm and before 5am, to stop alcohol being marketed to young people;
- Ban alcohol ads which are aimed at children or which link drinking to personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success.

CAS believes that sport has the potential to provide strong leadership in the area of responsible alcohol management and those sporting clubs that have already signed up to the Australian Drug Foundation's "Good Sports" program are already reaping the benefits in terms of improved club culture and growing club membership.

Detailed Submission

The Australian Bureau of Statistics found in its report into Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation 2007 that 4.4 million Australians participated in organised sport and recreation activity in the 12 months prior to the survey. Nearly two-thirds (66% or 10.5 million people) of the Australian population aged 15 years and over reported that they had participated in sports and physical recreation at least once during the 12 months prior to interview in 2005-06.

CAS believes that sport teaches all Australians important values. In particular sport teaches children to respect and play by the rules, to play together in a team with others regardless of their race or religion and to respect authority and the umpires.

Given the stated aim of the Bill is to create a culture of responsible drinking, and to facilitate a reduction in the alcohol toll resulting from excessive alcohol consumption, sport is in a unique position to do this because of:

- The number Australians involved in sport
- The primary demographic group involved in sport are Australia's children and young adults

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that the highest participation rates were reported by people aged 25–34 years (75%) and 15–17 years (75%) and the lowest for those aged 65 years and over (49%). Overall, males (5.2 million or 66%) and females (5.3 million or 66%) showed similar participation rates for sports and physical recreation.

The Australian Drug Foundation in conjunction with the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation has an excellent national program in its "Good Sports" program with the specific aims:

- Highlight the sporting club's important role in the community
- Help clubs serve and sell alcohol with the law
- Reduce alcohol-related problems (e.g. Binge and underage drinking, violence, etc.)
- Increase club viability
- Enable clubs to meet their duty of care obligations
- Eliminate drink driving incidents
- Provide free ongoing education and support.

CAS asserts that the most effective way for the Government to affect real change in the drinking culture of Australia is to further significantly invest in this program to ensure:

- A wide range of sports and sporting clubs are encouraged to take up this program
- Sporting clubs in all states and territories of Australia have access to the programs

CAS believes these measures coupled with public education and early intervention programs similar to existing programs targeting speeding motorists or smoking would provide the greatest level of success for the government.

CAS submits that the specific measures in the Bill including:

- Restrict TV and radio alcohol advertising to after 9pm and before 5am, to stop alcohol being marketed to young people;
- Ban alcohol ads which are aimed at children or which link drinking to personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success.

would not be as successful as the before mentioned strategies as they do not directly affect the drinking culture of peer groups. CAS asserts that public education program would be more effective. CAS also believes these measures would be difficult to implement. The suggested measures may actually result in significant financial cost to sporting clubs and associations. This in turn may be counter productive as the financial cost to sport may affect its capacity to effectively implement programs that work to change the culture of drinking across the country.

Conclusion

CAS supports strong action on the stated aim of the Bill to create a culture of responsible drinking, and to facilitate a reduction in the alcohol toll resulting from excessive alcohol consumption. CAS believes that investment in existing programs such as "Good Sports" will provide an effective method to achieve this aim coupled with a public education program. CAS believes that restricting TV and Radio advertising and / or banning alcohol ads which are linked to sporting success would not be as effective, would be difficult to implement and would be detrimental to sporting clubs and organisations.