

## **National Liquor News November 2014**

### **Still getting drinkers wrong**

Victoria's state election has bought out a lot of movement and activity by the anti-alcohol groups. The Australian Medical Association also recently held a national alcohol summit in Canberra.

As always, there were long listings of alcohol-related harms, carefully selected statistics to show the situation is always getting worse, and highly professional spokespeople demanding the Commonwealth or Victorian government change the laws to suit these people's views.

And as usual, what was noticeable about the media releases, gatherings and forums was that there was one group of people in Australia who were certainly not represented and never, ever mentioned: the millions of (usually) moderate Australian drinkers who do no harm to anyone. Ironically, at one government forum there was a highly professional representative for injecting and illicit drug users.

Sadly, if you are that typical Australian drinker you count for nothing in the eyes of the anti-alcohol groups. What you want in regards to the way alcohol is made available, priced or marketed is irrelevant to them. They simply look through the great majority of drinkers as if they did not exist, never seeing them as fellow humans who can perfectly well make their own choices and who actually find drinking a source of enjoyment, pleasurable and of being sociable. Enjoyment and pleasure are concepts that were never, ever mentioned.

The only drinkers they can consider are those as a victim, a criminal or terribly ill. And that is why their sensible drinking advertising is so ineffective – the ads are based on that extreme view of what drinking is.

Because the anti-alcohol groups can't 'see' drinkers, let alone credit them with having opinions, the public health movement simply cannot understand why they continually fail to shift politicians' views to supporting the sort of clampdowns the NGOs think are required. Instead the health groups blame the alcohol industry as the only possible reason why politicians don't agree with them - because the public health movement can detect the industry but not the drinking population.

There is some justice. In return, drinkers happily ignore these groups and their campaigns.