

## **National liquor news November 2013**

### **The stunning silence**

DSICA's members and the rest of the alcohol industry have often been accused by Australia's alcohol researchers and anti-alcohol advocates of using advertising and marketing that increases underage drinking.

It's a common allegation by the anti-alcohol advocates, and it gets repeated worldwide – in the United Kingdom, United States and New Zealand, and at the WHO. These alcohol experts and organisations truly believe it, as well as that its continual repetition makes it even more 'true'.

But these groups are slowly realising that underage drinking is decreasing in Australia, and also in those other nations I listed. The sad fact for the National Action on Alcohol Alliance is that underage drinking in Australia peaked in 2001.

However it is only in recent months that a few of Australia's taxpayer-funded researchers and advocates have started to publicly admit this somewhat inconvenient fact. It is a trend which has been well known to the alcohol industry for the past few years but one we did not publicise because no one would have believed us if we said it.

So it has taken Australia's alcohol researchers at least five years to publicly acknowledge the very welcome downward trend. Of course they are doing what all good campaigners do: not admitting defeat and quickly redefining the problem they are concerned about as something different than what they were previously combating.

So what is the stunning silence I'm referring to? It is the anti-alcohol movements' and their alcohol researchers' complete and utter silence as to why the downward underage drinking trend exists. They have no answers they are willing to state in public. This is a complete contrast to their total confidence and public statements that the 'underage binge drinking epidemic' they spruiked was a result of the industry's increased marketing and advertising, increased availability and too low prices.

Australia is being sadly let down by its taxpayer-funded alcohol experts and the advocacy movement they support. They seem to be world-class political advocates but unable as researchers to look outside what they are against – the alcohol industry – in order to find the causes of a 12-year long trend.