

Government statistics destroy case for RTD tax hike

The Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia (DSICA) has called on the Federal Government to reverse its contentious tax increase on pre-mixed drinks following a submission by the Government's key national adviser on health and welfare statistics and information that reveals no link between these products and binge-drinking.

DSICA today welcomed the views of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee that: *"... the increased availability of RTDs does not appear to have directly contributed to an increase in risky alcohol consumption."*

The AIHW submission cited no change in the pattern of risky drinking among young Australians since 2001 and no change in overall alcohol consumption over the past 20 years. It also reported: *"Less than 1% of young males (aged 12-15 years) and 2% of young females had a pattern of drinking every week that was risky or high risk for short-term harm."*

"The AIHW has validated the industry's concern over this tax grab. It states there has been a 'modest' increase in consumption of RTD products, but correctly highlights this is being driven by older Australians," said Stephen Riden, Information and Research Manager for DSICA.

"The AIHW should be accepted as the independent umpire in the debate over RTDs and problem drinking. Its view is conclusive – there is no link between pre-mixed alcohol products and an increase in binge-drinking," he said.

"The Government needs to accept there are no public health grounds or evidence to support the RTD tax hike. Australians deserve a real and comprehensive solution to binge-drinking and substance abuse.

"Now is the time to address substance abuse in a meaningful way. DSICA supports a comprehensive campaign focused on long-term strategies to reduce alcohol abuse in our community."

A copy of the AIHW Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Ready-to-Drink Alcohol Beverages is available from:

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/alcohol_beverages/submissions/sub23.pdf

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