



## In their own words: 'No Evidence' for continuation of Alcopop Tax

The Government and public health groups, in their own words, accept there is no evidence to support the continuation of the failed 70% tax hike on ready-to-drink products.

The Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon, admitted in the Parliament that she has no proof that there has been a decrease in the level of harmful drinking by the target group of the tax increase:

- *"What is very difficult to be able to tell – and I agree with this – is who is consuming less.....".<sup>1</sup>*

The Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing, Mr David Kalisch, made the following statements before the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the RTD amendment bills on 11 February 2009:

- *"The other aspect that I would also draw to your attention is that anecdotal evidence we have received from ED [emergency department] departments suggest that there has been no change to ED presentations since the change in the excise."<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis added).*
- *"... it is difficult to draw a conclusion about whether there has been a reduction or no change in harmful drinking."<sup>3</sup>*

All health groups and researchers who gave evidence before the Senate Community Affairs Committee on 10 and 11 March 2009 were asked whether they had any evidence of a reduction in harmful alcohol consumption since the RTD tax increase. Consistently they stated that they had no evidence.

Professor Anthony Shakeshaft, Senior Lecturer at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), stated:

- *"Unfortunately, we just do not have the data that would tell us whether young people who were going out on Friday and Saturday nights – whatever it is – and getting really drunk are still doing that and, even if they are, whether they are doing it on some other type of alcohol."<sup>4</sup>*

Professor Ian Webster, Chair of the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AERF), stated:

- *"I have not seen any evidence which has shown a decline in alcohol problems in the community since it was introduced."<sup>5</sup>*

Mr Geoff Munro, Director of the Community Alcohol Action Network at the Australian Drug Foundation, stated:

- *"I do not think there have been any large-scale surveys that have been published that would indicate what is happening ....."<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> House of Representatives *Hansard*, 25 February 2009, p 86.

<sup>2</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs *Committee Hansard*, 11 March 2009 p CA54.

<sup>3</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs *Committee Hansard*, 11 March 2009 p CA55

<sup>4</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs *Committee Hansard*, 10 March 2009 p CA41

<sup>5</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs *Committee Hansard*, 10 March 2009 p CA56

<sup>6</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs *Committee Hansard*, 10 March 2009 p CA49

In response to a direct question regarding is she was aware of any evidence that would indicate a reduction in sales of alcohol to risky drinkers, Associate Professor Tanya Chikritzhs of the National Drug Research Institute stated:

- *“Directly answering that question, the answer is no.”*<sup>7</sup>

**DSICA will make direct comment on the findings of the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the RTD tax increase when they are released.**

***Ends#***

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<sup>7</sup> Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs *Committee Hansard*, 10 March 2009 p CA24