



Government survey of 25,000 Australians confirms no evidence to support RTD tax hike

The Detailed Findings of the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey released today has confirmed that the Federal Government's 70% tax hike on Ready-to-Drink (RTD) alcohol products has seriously missed the mark.

The Survey, carried out amongst 25,000 Australians aged over 12 years by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) between July and November 2007, found that:

- Beer is the drink of choice for males considered risky or high risk drinkers, regardless of age;
- Risky and high risk drinking among young women (14-19 years) fell to 10.6 per cent – down from 14.6 per cent in 2001 and 12.3 per cent in 2004;
- Risky and high risk drinking among young men (14-19 years) fell to 7 per cent – down from 8.8 per cent in 2001 and 7.7 per cent in 2004; and
- Pre-mixed alcohol beverages were not ranked as the drink of choice for any age group considered to be risky or high risk drinkers.

These findings add further weight to the AIHW's submission earlier this year 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.

"The evidence released today provides further proof that while too many Australians are drinking to get drunk, a tax slug on spirit-based RTDs alone is not the way to deal with the problem," said Mr Stephen Riden, Information and Research Manager for the Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia.

"These findings confirm there is no evidence to back the position on RTDs and reaffirms that the tax hike is completely ineffective as a health initiative."

Mr Riden noted the RTD tax hike is the only piece of revenue-raising legislation yet to be presented to the Senate, let alone passed. "It is not too late for the Government to reconsider this fundamentally flawed tax, especially in light of these important research findings," he said.

DSICA will continue to press for the RTD tax hike to be abandoned in favour of an evidence-based, comprehensive and well thought-out approach to substance abuse.

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