

**TASKFORCESUBMISSION:** submission

**NAME:** Mrs. Anne Bergen

**POSITION:** Corresponding Secretary

**ORGANISATION:** National Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia Ltd.

**SUBMISSION1:** The National Health Preventative Taskforce is to be congratulated on the thoroughness of its research and recommendations. We would like to comment on the recommendations relating to tobacco and alcohol.

#### 1. Tobacco

The progress that has been made in reducing cigarette smoking has been excellent but we agree with the Taskforce that we have taken the foot off the accelerator pedal in the past six years and we must renew efforts to further reduce the percentage of people who begin to smoke. We support the main thrust of the Taskforce proposals:

- to increase taxes on cigarettes. Price does have an effect, particularly for young people who may be tempted to take up the habit.
- to use the tax revenue in high profile media campaigns.
- to focus on treating cigarette dependency in the health care system.
- to make it mandatory to sell cigarettes in plain packaging. We consider that the graphic health warnings could still be part of this packaging and would stand out if they are the only thing on the packets. No doubt cigarette companies would try to overcome this as they did with the graphic warnings by developing pretty cigarette packet holders to hide these warnings, but it is still worth doing. Perhaps such holders could be outlawed.
- to make these measures part of a coordinated plan of community support and education that would also address cultural determinants.

#### 2. Alcohol

We agree that the two most successful ways to reduce alcohol consumption and are through higher taxation and reducing availability. While these are not the most popular measures, there is almost unprecedented support by the public and governments for action to reduce the problems of youth binge drinking.

##### Taxation

We were pleased that the government introduced higher taxes on "alcopops" that are specifically targeted at young girls and women. Figures now show that, since the introduction of the tax, the consumption of RTDs has declined by 7 million standard drinks per week, with an

overall decline in net weekly alcohol consumption of three million standard drinks since April. The alcopops tax is working.

I was therefore appalled to read that the Independent Distillers are now exploiting a loophole by manufacturing beer that doesn't attract the higher tax, then removing the beer taste and adding sweet flavourings and packaging the new drink, "Bolt", so that it looks and tastes like normal RTDs and are selling it more cheaply. Changes to alcohol taxation policy would need to take account of the ability of the liquor industry to find such loopholes.

While it may seem sensible to have volumetric taxation on alcoholic drinks your discussion paper does recognise that there is a case for higher tax rates on some drinks like cask wine, alcopops, and even beer, the consumption of which leads to particular problems in the community. We agree.

- Greater regulation of alcohol availability: The rapid increase in the number of liquor outlets has had a big impact on the increase in problem drinking and these need to be reduced.

- We also support other measures that the Taskforce suggests including:  
Improved enforcement of liquor laws. e.g. The NSW Secondary Supply Law is important but will only be effective if it is seen to be enforced.

Restricting advertising and sponsorship by alcohol

Encouraging more low-alcohol drinks beverages

Lowering the BAC of motor car drivers

Encouraging primary health care staff to undertake brief interventions to change drinking behaviour and attitudes to consumption.

The important thing is that action is taken without delay.

**PRIVACY:** yes

**SUBMIT:** Submit