

## Alcohol Beverages Australia Submission to COAG Online Round Table on Behavioural Insights

Alcohol Beverages Australia (ABA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the COAG National Summit on Reducing Violence Against Women.

ABA supports zero tolerance policies for domestic violence and believes that in order to reduce domestic violence, accurate evidence must form the knowledge base for policies and programs. ABA applauds the use of a behavioural insights approach to generate evidence based and informed policies and practices to achieve this urgently needed reduction.

ABA urges COAG members and relevant government departments to use the substantial body of research that points to the acceptance of violence, gender power imbalances, and deep-seated attitudes towards women as the substantive factors enabling and promoting family and domestic violence.

ABA offers its encouragement to COAG members and stakeholders in this process to:

- Recognise that the overall level of violence accepted and/or condoned in a society drives the level of violence that is alcohol-related.
- Recognise that the drivers of violent behaviour have their roots in childhood development and adolescent mental health. In addition, violence is often learnt behaviour from adults in the family group who have an acceptance of using violence as legitimate<sup>1</sup>.
- Work towards reducing the cultural acceptability of domestic and family violence using a combination of education, social change programs, appropriate regulation of behaviours, and the certainty of legal sanctions for violence<sup>2</sup>.

ABA is concerned about the detrimental effects voices in this debate may have where they do not have sound evidence base or are influenced by another agenda.

An example of this is the *National Framework for Action to Prevent Alcohol-Related Family Violence (the Framework)* by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE). The Framework attempts to align alcohol consumption to domestic violence. The overwhelming weight of domestic and family violence research and evidence suggests that alcohol is not a cause of domestic violence. Instead, power imbalances and gender norms are far better predictors of domestic and family violence<sup>3,4</sup>.

*Of particular concern are the “primary prevention” mechanisms outlined in the Framework which are concerned with reducing the physical and economic availability of alcohol in order to reduce*

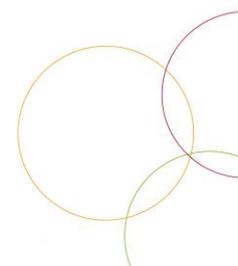
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<sup>1</sup> *Domestic Violence in Australia*, Senate Finance and Public Administrations References Committee, 2015, p.11

<sup>2</sup> *Domestic Violence in Australia*, Senate Finance and Public Administrations References Committee, 2015, p.66-67

<sup>3</sup> *Domestic Violence in Australia*, Senate Finance and Public Administrations References Committee, 2015, p. xiv, pgs 3 & 10

<sup>4</sup> *Not now, Not Ever: Putting an end to domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*, 2015



*domestic violence. There is no credible evidence to suggest a reduction in alcohol availability and in turn alcohol consumption would result in a decrease in domestic violence.*

*On the contrary, the evidence establishes that areas with high economic and physical availability of alcohol have lower rates of apprehended violence orders compared with areas that have lower incomes and more dispersed liquor outlets. This is supported by the evidence that shows high income urban suburbs in NSW<sup>5</sup>, which therefore have the highest economic and physical availability of alcohol, have the lowest rates of apprehended violence orders<sup>6</sup>.*

That there is no causal link between alcohol and domestic violence is also recognised by the White Ribbon Foundation. The fact sheet on their website states:

*Almost even numbers of sober and drunken people are violent. Where studies do show more drinkers are violent to their partners, the studies are not able to explain why many drunken men (80% of heavy and binge drinkers) did not abuse their wives. Alcohol and other addictive substances are used by abusers to give themselves permission to be violent.<sup>7</sup>*

ABA recognises that there instances where alcohol is present when acts of domestic violence are perpetrated. However, it is a misconception that that alcohol causes violence. In fact, the reverse is true, with anger among men predicting heavy drinking and not the reverse<sup>8</sup>. Further, heavy drinking among men has been associated with violent sexist attitudes.<sup>9</sup> From this the conclusion could be drawn that “highly aggressive, angry men choose to drink heavily and frequently, quite possibly to excuse violent behaviour.”<sup>10</sup>

By using alcohol as a scapegoat for domestic violence, focus on the real causes of domestic violence is reduced, letting down some of the most vulnerable members of society.

ABA would welcome any further appropriate opportunity to contribute evidence around alcohol issues to assist any part of the COAG National Summit on Reducing Violence Against Women.

Fergus Taylor

Executive Director

Alcohol Beverages Australia

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<sup>5</sup> *Taxation Statistics 2013-14: Median and mean taxable income by state/territory and postcode, 2003-04 and 2013-14 income year*, Australian Taxation Office, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar\\_news/ADVO-Rates.aspx](http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_news/ADVO-Rates.aspx), accessed 26 October 2015.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/updated\\_factsheets\\_Nov\\_13/Factsheet\\_10\\_Ten\\_Common\\_Myths\\_and\\_Misconceptions.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/updated_factsheets_Nov_13/Factsheet_10_Ten_Common_Myths_and_Misconceptions.pdf), accessed 28 October 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Harder, V.S., Ayer, L.A., Naylor, M.R. and Helzer, J.E. (2014) Alcohol, moods and male-female differences: daily interactive voice response over 6 months. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*. Jan-Feb: 49(1).

<sup>9</sup> Hopkins, M., Miller, D, and Kotchick, B. (2005) The Archetypal Man’s Man: An Examination of the Relationship Between Alcohol Abuse, Hostile Sexism and Masculinity Among College Males. *Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences*. Vol. 4

<sup>10</sup> Fox, A. *Understanding Behaviour in the Australian and New Zealand Night-Time Economies* (Jan 2014)

