

Community leaders call on Government to put health first and abandon plans to cut the price of alcohol

22 February 2022

More than 80 community leaders and organisations have signed an open letter to Treasurer, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, calling on the Government to abandon any plans to cut the price of alcohol because of the risk to the health, wellbeing and safety of Australians.

The letter was supported by organisations including the Cancer Council Australia, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Full Stop Australia, Aboriginal Drug & Alcohol Council (ADAC), Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM), and other community leaders such as Former Australian of the year Fiona Stanley and Local Hero of the year Shanna Whan.

In the letter, community leaders said that any reductions to the price of alcoholic products would be devastating, particularly at a time when we're seeing increases in alcohol harm.

Alcohol contributes to a range of harms including alcohol use disorder, family violence, road traffic accidents, cancer, injury and death.

Between 2019 and 2020, Alcohol-induced deaths increased by 8.3 per cent, calls to the national alcohol and other drug hotline doubled, and there were increased ambulance callouts to homes because of alcohol harm.

Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council CEO, Adjunct Associate Professor Scott Wilson, said at a time when many alcohol and other drug services are seeing an influx of people seeking help, the Government is sending the wrong message by considering alcohol tax cuts.

"We're already seeing a flood of people trying to access services because of alcohol, and I shudder to think of the impact on the community, if the price of alcohol is cut," A/Prof Wilson said.

Australasian College for Emergency Medicine President, Dr Claire Skinner, said that Emergency Departments (EDs) are already seeing significant numbers of alcohol-related presentations.

"Emergency Departments are already under immense pressure. Alcohol and other drug harm is one of the largest, preventable public health issues facing emergency departments. Cutting alcohol taxes could drive more harm and further increase avoidable presentations to EDs," Dr Skinner said.

FARE CEO, Ms Caterina Giorgi, said our priority should be improving the health and wellbeing of our community.

"Alcohol lobbyists have been pushing to cut alcohol taxes for decades. Now they are using the cover of the pandemic to push their agenda," Ms Giorgi said.

"At a time when alcohol harms and demand for health and community services are rising, it makes no sense to cut alcohol taxes, which will increase alcohol harm."

Read the letter: <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-Tax-Open-Letter.pdf>

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