24 February 2010

National Drug Strategy Consultation  
MDP 27  
GPO Box 9848  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: NABIC response to the National Drug Strategy Consultation Paper

The National Alcohol Beverage Industries Council (NABIC) is the peak association for the Australian drinks sector, representing the Winemakers Federation of Australia, Brewers Association of Australia and New Zealand, the Australian Hotels Association, Clubs Australia, the Australian Liquor Stores Association, and the Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia.

As the peak association for the industry, we are a sector that should be a key part of the National Drug Strategy consultation across the development of the National Drug Strategy 2010-2015, given the commitment to cross-sectoral partnerships outlined in the consultation paper.

As the peak association for a major industry sector, and drawing on the consultation paper’s observation that “… there may be new opportunities to build partnerships with corporate and philanthropic organisations”, we consider that a partnership approach should rightly extend to non-government and industry stakeholders. Such partnerships are essential to creating a coordinated approach to reducing drug-related harm.

We note that the individual members of NABIC learned of the consultation for developing the future National Drug Strategy through a Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS) communiqué of 27 November 2009, and not through any direct communication from the MCDS or formal notification processes.

We also note that the communiqué stated that officials will be holding targeted consultations with key stakeholders. To date, none of the members of NABIC, nor NABIC itself, have been contacted regarding consultations. Nonetheless, we welcome the opportunity to provide comment during the development of the National Drug Strategy 2010-2015.

NABIC would also draw the MCDS’s attention to its use of the National Expert Advisory Committee (NEAP) for advice and programme implementation. Given the relatively small pool of Australian drug and alcohol experts and the fact that Australian governments (Commonwealth and states/territories) are the major funders of both research and of drug and alcohol programmes, great care must be taken by the MCDS to ensure that the advice provided and its implementation are truly external and independent. Therefore, we believe it
appropriate that steps should be taken to ensure that any expert advisors engaged by the MCDS remain truly independent, and do not undertake a dual role as paid advocates or lobbyists for the NGO advocacy sector or its affiliates. NABIC believes that this is a reasonable request given the close relationships arising from Australia’s small and interdependent alcohol and drug research and advocacy networks.

Again, NABIC welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the consultation paper and we look forward to the release of the draft National Drug Strategy later this year.

Yours faithfully

Tim Salt
Chair