

## Opening Statement from Public Health groups to the National Alcohol Strategy Round Table

Parliament House Canberra, Tuesday 24 July 2018

The below signed organisations, which have a commitment to reducing alcohol related harm in Australia, support the following opening statement on the issue of the participation of representatives of the alcohol industry in Australia contributing to or influencing public health policy on alcohol.

1. We believe Australian governments must have a cohesive, evidence-based and effective national strategy to reduce the enormous burden of alcohol related harm in Australia. We are therefore committed to constructively contributing to the development, completion and implementation of this important national strategy.
2. We note that Australia has not had a national alcohol strategy since 2011, that the process to establish a strategy commenced in 2013, and that as yet no strategy has been finalised.
3. We have provided feedback on the publicly available Consultation Draft of the National Alcohol Strategy circulated in December 2017 and reiterate that we believe the Strategy must retain its commitment to evidence-based policy and that it could be strengthened by clearly articulating priorities, goals, measures, responsibilities and timelines. Our intention today is not to revisit these submissions unless it is relevant to the conversation.
4. We do not believe there is a role for the alcohol industry or its representatives to contribute to or influence that policy. We support and endorse the statement in the Consultation Draft of the National Alcohol Strategy (p24):  
*“Australia does not support any ongoing role for industry in setting or developing national alcohol policy”.*
5. That position is reinforced by the World Health Organisation position which states: *“In the view of the WHO, the alcohol industry has no role in the formulation of alcohol policies, which must be protected from distortion by commercial or vested interests”.*<sup>i</sup>
6. The fundamental reason for this is a core conflict of interest. Representatives of the industry have a legal responsibility to their shareholders to maximise profits and they do so primarily by maximising sales. We believe that purpose is structurally inconsistent with a National Alcohol Strategy which seeks to minimise alcohol related harm, primarily by reducing alcohol consumption in Australia.
7. We have agreed to participate in this one-day roundtable in the hope it will be seen as a show of good will – and in an effort to advance the completion of a National Alcohol Strategy.

Signed

ORGANISATIONS

John Crozier and Jane Martin, Co-Chairs of National Alliance for Action on Alcohol

Public Health Association of Australia

Australian Medical Association

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education

Alcohol and Drug Foundation

McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth

WA Cancer Prevention Research Unit

Cancer Council Victoria

Alcohol Policy Coalition

Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association

Turning Point

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Research Australia

#### INDIVIDUALS

Dr Adrian Reynolds, Clinical Director Alcohol and Drug Service, Department of Health, Tasmania

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<sup>i</sup> Chan, M. (2013). WHO's response to article on doctors and the alcohol industry: an unhealthy mix? *BMJ*, 346:f2647.