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Speaking Notes**

**National Alcohol Strategy Stakeholder Roundtable  
Main Committee Room, Parliament House  
9am, 24 July 2018**

**Introduction**

- Good morning. Thank you <sup>s 22.</sup> for your kind introduction and thank you for facilitating today's roundtable.
- I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of this land — the Ngunnawal people — and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.
- I also extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be present here today.
- On behalf of the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum, I would like to thank everyone for attending today's important roundtable here in Parliament House.

- It's a big agenda and there are important matters that need to be worked through — and so it's great you are all here.

## 1. Impact of excessive alcohol consumption

- 1.1 As everyone here would know, misuse of alcohol continues to have a significant negative social effect — and adds substantially, and unnecessarily, to the workload of our already busy emergency services and hospital staff.
- The latest estimate of the social costs of the misuse of alcohol in Australia, as reported in *Australia's Health 2018* released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in June 2018, was slightly more than \$14 billion—through productivity losses, traffic accidents, crime and health care costs.
  - Overall consumption of alcohol in Australia has either declined or remained stable between 2009 and 2016. However, we know there is still a significant number of Australians consuming alcohol at risky levels, adversely affecting their health and potentially the wellbeing of others around them.
- 1.2 The Australian Government is committed to preventing and reducing alcohol-related harms for all Australians — and is working hard to reduce its impact in communities across the country.

- To do this, we are working closely with state and territory governments, stakeholders and communities in the challenge to get it right.

## 2. National Alcohol Strategy

2.1 The National Alcohol Strategy, when finalised, will provide a framework to guide the work of the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments — and service providers — to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms.

- The public consultation process undertaken earlier this year highlighted several issues that required further consideration, and you are all here today to discuss them and provide advice for my fellow Ministers and I to consider.
- I am as keen as anyone here to finalise this strategy by the end of the year— but we need to get it right, and if it takes a little longer to do so, we should take this time.

2.2 We have a wide range of stakeholders here today — and this reflects the fact you all have important roles to play.

- Preventing and minimising alcohol-related harms in Australia cannot be achieved by governments alone, and a strength of Australia's approach is the strong and enduring partnerships developed between governments, non-government organisations and community groups.

- Looking around this committee room, I know there is the determination and goodwill here today to get stuck in and work through the areas that need more attention so we can clear a path to finalising the strategy.

### **3. Issues for discussion**

3.1 As I said earlier, there are a few key issues that need to be worked through today.

- These include:
  - the merits of targeted versus whole-of-population approaches as identified in the draft strategy;
  - governance issues — and the role and membership of the proposed Expert Reference Group;
  - targets and key performance indicators; and
  - the appropriateness or otherwise of the identified opportunities for action.

3.2 Governments acting alone will not be as successful at preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm as everyone here working collaboratively.

- That's why it's important we have everyone's "buy in" today on discussing these key matters.

## Conclusion

- I am absolutely committed to reducing the harm excessive alcohol consumption causes — not only to the person drinking it, but to those around them.
- Collectively, we can make a big difference in this space — and greatly improve the lives of many, many Australians.
- I speak for all members of the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum when I say thank you for taking the time to come and contribute today. I wish everyone here productive discussions so we can move closer to finalising the National Alcohol Strategy.
- Thank you.

**[Ends]**

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