

21 February 2022

The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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Cc: The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care

Dear Treasurer

Put the health, wellbeing and safety of Australians first and abandon any plans to cut the price of alcohol

For us all, the most important thing is the health and wellbeing of our families and communities. Right now, this includes doing all we can to prevent people from contracting COVID-19 and also preventing the shadow pandemics of worsening mental health and increases in family violence, both of which are exacerbated by alcohol.

As health, social and community organisations and advocates, we strongly oppose any moves to reduce the price of alcohol through reductions in the beer and spirit excise in the next Budget or as an election commitment. It is well established that decreasing the price of alcohol results in increases in alcohol use and the associated health and social harms.¹

Any reductions to the price of alcoholic products would be absolutely devastating, at a time when we are seeing increases in the many harms from alcohol that negatively impact on far too many Australians.

Between 2019 and 2020, we saw an 8.3% increase in the rate of alcohol-induced deaths.² We saw an approximate doubling in calls to the National Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) hotline from early 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.³ There have also been reports of increased involvement of alcohol in family violence incidents.⁴

These alcohol harms are the result of significant increases in alcohol sales during the pandemic. Alcohol manufacturers and retailers have been making super profits, with an increase of 29% in revenue between 2019 and 2021, resulting in an additional \$3.6 billion from alcohol retail sales.⁵

Any reductions in alcohol excise rates would result in alcohol being cheaper relative to the cost-of-living, and result in increases in alcohol harm. A reduction to the usual level of taxation revenue would also lower government resources that are desperately needed to manage this pandemic.

We urge you to abandon any plans to cut the excise of alcoholic products, and to prioritise the health, wellbeing and safety of families and communities.

Yours sincerely,



SIGNATORIES ON FOLLOWING PAGE

1 Elder RW, Lawrence B, Ferguson A, Naimi TS, Brewer RD, Chattopadhyay SK, et al. The Effectiveness of Tax Policy Interventions for Reducing Excessive Alcohol Consumption and Related Harms. American Journal of Preventive Medicine. 2010;38(2):217-29.
2 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Causes of Death, Australia' (cat no. 3303.0, 29 September 2020).
3 Data supplied by the Australian Government Department of Health
4 Family violence and alcohol during Covid-19, May 2020. [Family-violence-and-alcohol-during-COVID-19_final.pdf \(fare.org.au\)](https://www.fare.org.au/family-violence-and-alcohol-during-COVID-19_final.pdf)
5 Alcohol retail during COVID-19 (2020-2021), February 2022, [Alcohol-retail-during-COVID-19-2020-2021.pdf \(fare.org.au\)](https://www.fare.org.au/alcohol-retail-during-COVID-19-2020-2021.pdf)

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