



MEDIA RELEASE

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More than 80% back 'alcopops' and tobacco tax: Newspoll survey

Australians would overwhelmingly support increased 'alcopops' and tobacco tax if funds raised were used for preventive health programs, according to Newspoll research published today (24/9).

A survey of more than 1200 Australian adults showed 84 per cent supported the Government's proposed 'alcopops' tax and 88 per cent backed increased tobacco tax, if most of the revenue funded programs to help prevent diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

The research was commissioned by the Heart Foundation, Cancer Council, Public Health Association of Australia and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).

Professor Ian Olver, Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Officer, said the Newspoll survey showed Australians strongly supported tax increases that could reduce consumption of harmful products while raising funds to improve the nation's health.

"While 57 per cent of survey respondents support the 'alcopops' tax irrespective of how the money is used, this increases to 84 per cent if most of the revenue goes towards preventing diseases such as heart disease and cancer," Professor Olver said.

"Eighty-four per cent is an extraordinary majority, particularly for an issue like paying more tax. It sends a strong message to politicians."

Professor Mike Daube, President of the Public Health Association of Australia, said introduction of the 'alcopops' tax coincided with a significant decrease in spirit consumption, particularly ready-to-drink mixes marketed at young people.

"Senate support for the tax would be a win-win result if the government ensures most of the revenue funds public health," Professor Daube said. "These measures could prevent thousands of premature deaths."

Maurice Swanson, tobacco control spokesperson for the Heart Foundation, said evidence showed tobacco tax was one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking rates, a principle likely to apply to alcohol tax.

"Tobacco tax, which has not increased in real terms for a decade, has been shown to reduce smoking rates significantly," Mr Swanson said.

"Increased tobacco tax would also raise much needed revenue for public health programs. Tens of thousands of Australians die each year from preventable diseases, yet less than two per cent of health system expenditure goes towards prevention programs."

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