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## **ALCOPOPS: PUBLIC HEALTH WELCOMES TAX INTRODUCTION**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) welcomes the long-awaited introduction of legislation to close the loophole on 'alcopops'.

This is an important measure that will help to protect the health and well-being of young people who have been cynically targeted by the drinks industry. All the PR in the world cannot hide the reality that the drinks industry has been getting a tax break for products designed to mask the taste of alcohol and that help young people get drunk quicker. The industry's approach – which has included attempts to circumvent the alcopops tax by creating new products – shows just how desperate the companies are to target the youth market.

Only last week the Distilled Spirits Industry Council even stooped to stalking MPs in Canberra with a mobile billboard, claiming that the tax is unfair and dishonest.

"This kind of silly stunt just goes to show how desperate the industry is to try to protect its profits at the expense of young Australians. What is unfair and dishonest is industry attempts to pretend that this campaign is not all about protecting profits and a lucrative youth market," said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer of PHAA.

"The Australian Government has developed a comprehensive National Binge Drinking Strategy that includes the alcopops tax, but has also involved the development of a marketing campaign and the announcement of community grants to a range of services addressing binge drinking at the local level.

"It is worth remembering that 1 in 4 hospitalisations of young people aged 15-24 happen because of alcohol, with 70 Australians under 25 being hospitalised because of alcohol-caused assault alone in an average week. The Australian Government should be congratulated for taking some tough decisions to try to reverse these statistics.

"A Newspan survey commissioned by the Heart Foundation, Cancer Council, PHAA and Action on Smoking and Health late last year indicated that Australians would overwhelmingly support increased alcopops and tobacco tax if funds raised were used for preventive health programs. 84% of respondents indicated support for the alcopops tax if most of the revenue was used to fund preventive health programs and 57% still supported the alcopops tax irrespective of how the revenue was used.

"PHAA has long supported volumetric alcohol taxation (taxing according to alcohol content, rather than the type of drink) and will continue to support the alcopops tax as an important step in this direction, which should be complemented by further measures such as controls on alcohol promotion and re-investment of some of the revenue raised into major public education programs. We hope that MPs and Senators will not be bullied by desperate attempts by industry groups to secure their profits at the expense of young Australians, even if they are pursued around town by a giant billboard," said Mr Moore.

(ENDS)

**For further information/comment:**

Michael Moore, CEO of the PHAA

0417 249 731