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MEDIA RELEASE

Non spirit based alcopops ruled out by local industry

Australia's brewers and winemakers have taken a strong stance to rule out the controversial overseas practice of replicating spirit based RTDs by manufacturing alcopops using ethanol stripped from wine or beer. This announcement comes ahead of Drug Action Week¹ which starts on Sunday.

Both the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) and Australasian Associated Brewers Inc (AAB) have resolved to work with Government to ensure that any definitional loopholes which might permit substitution are closed as soon as possible so as to avoid any unintended consequences of the recent tax decision on alcopops.

WFA and AAB both made submissions to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Ready-to-Drink Alcohol Beverages which had hearings last week advising their intent to work with Government to close off the loophole so that it cannot be exploited.

WFA Chief Executive, Stephen Strachan, commented, "Our members are proud local producers of quality wine. The wine sector is made up of 2,300 winemakers, 7,500 grapegrowers and 60,000 direct and indirect jobs across the country. We are happy to leave the manufacture of pre-mixed products to spirits manufacturers."

AAB Executive Director Stephen Swift added, "Our members brew 98% of the beer sold in Australia. They have strong business links to the local malting barley farming community. Australia's brewers have resolved not to use ethanol stripped from beer as the base for alcopops."

The two organisations have signed separate letters to the Government setting out the in-principle decisions of the two organisations and describing the steps undertaken by both associations to develop policy options on this matter for government consideration.

For further information or comment:

Stephen Swift
Executive Director
Australasian Associated Brewers Inc
02 6295 7199

Stephen Strachan
Chief Executive
Winemakers' Federation of Australia
08 8222 9255 / 0438 847418

¹ See www.drugactionweek.org.au