

8 March 2011

Proposed ban on school fundraising is ill-considered and counterproductive

The Winemakers' Federation of Australia rejects the call by the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) for schools in Australia to ban the use of alcohol products in fundraising activities.

We have seen no evidence to suggest this will have any affect in changing attitudes to alcohol abuse and underage drinking in Australia.

On the contrary, it is likely such an ill-considered idea will jeopardise sensible and genuine attempts to put across the right messages because many people will view it as ridiculous, out of touch with reality and another example of the "nanny state" telling them what to do.

This idea is also insulting to parents by implying there is some guilt involved in trying to win wine they would buy anyway if moderate wine consumption is a part of their lifestyle.

We are not trying to protect wine sales. Most fundraising wine is donated and some wineries donate quite a lot because they want to support community organisations. We just think it is time to put things into perspective.

The wine industry fully supports the goals of the World Health Organisation and the Australian Government to reduce "harmful use" of alcohol. We acknowledge the social costs caused by a minority of Australians who drink at such levels and are committed to evidence-based action that will support the global goal.

We are also aware that harmful use by underage drinkers is a particular community concern in Australia, though with the important clarification that wine is not the drink commonly associated with risky drinking levels in the youth population.

However, the ANCD's current campaign appears to be another misguided step along the path of trying to solve a complex problem by branding all alcohol as always bad.

The key is education not regulation.

The wine industry supports a range of initiatives to inform adults and children, including:

- Promotion of *A Parents' Guide to Teen Alcohol and Parties* – a free resource for families that provides information on how parents can model good drinking behaviour and communicate with teenagers about alcohol
- The Australian Wine Industry Research Institute's A-Z of information on wine and health issues – a free booklet that addresses commonly asked questions about wine and health. Over 13,000 copies were provided to cellar doors and wine industry associations for provision to the general public.
- Funding support for DrinkWise Australia, which was established to work to change Australia's drinking culture and increase the age that Australians are first introduced to alcohol. DrinkWise is 'campaign-based' and develops and implements national information and education campaigns. It offers practical resources that inform and support the community about alcohol use.
- Encouraging wineries to display the Department of Health's *Alcohol and your kids: A Guide for parents and carers* at cellar door.

WFA will continue to be a willing and active partner in any genuine attempts to deliver a coordinated, evidence-based approach to tackling the issue of youth risky drinking. However, we are equally determined to respond to poorly thought out ideas that may actually be counterproductive.