

## Media Statement

### **AER CALLS ON INDUSTRY TO DO THE RIGHT THING WITH ALCOPOPS REVENUE**

#### **Research shows most Australians want alcopops refund directed towards programs to reduce alcohol related harms**

**19th March 2009:** The Alcohol Education Rehabilitation Foundation (AER), Australia's leading alcohol harm minimisation body, said last night's defeat of the Alcopops Excise Bill in the Senate was a blow to progressive alcohol policy reform.

AER Chair Scott Wilson called on the alcohol Industry to now channel the alcopops tax refund into assisting with alcohol related harms. "The Alcopop Legislation was an unprecedented opportunity for progressive Government-led alcohol policy reform. We are saddened the political process has failed the people in this instance, and that the health and social sectors will bear the burden of this issue which costs us more than **\$15.3** billion in health related impacts each year.

"We now look to the alcohol Industry to demonstrate sound corporate leadership and call on the distillers to do the right thing. We commend the Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia (DSICA) who have already indicated their support for directing the funds towards community based programs aimed at genuinely addressing the abuse of alcohol in Australia. We welcome the opportunity that DSICA has extended to work with AER to realise this goal. AER also looks forward to working together with Industry and Health groups to ensure the estimated \$290 million refund is used to reduce alcohol related harm."

Mr Wilson said research shows **43% of Australians want more money spent on supporting alcohol related issues** and **more than three quarters** of Australians believe the alcopops tax refund should be channelled into education campaigns about the effects of drinking (**84%**) or spent to help people affected by excess drinking (**73%**).

Respondents to the AER Commissioned Galaxy Omnibus survey (\*\*) identified a broad range of priority areas where they felt spending could reduce the impacts of alcohol on the community. Australians were most likely to consider the following as priority areas:

- Babies and young children affected by alcohol (90%);
- Rehabilitation for victims of alcohol related accidents or violence (88%);
- Young people who require alcohol rehabilitation (87%);
- Alcohol related mental health services (86%);
- Education campaigns about the effects of drinking (85%);
- People of any age who require alcohol rehabilitation (84%);
- Alcohol related hospital resources (82%); and
- Indigenous communities (77%).

Mr Wilson said: “This research shows many Australians understand the issues and recognise the need to act to reduce the cost of alcohol related harm. The majority (73%) of Australians believe that the money earmarked to reduce the impact of alcohol on the community should be directed towards an independent, not for profit organisation. And 72% of the respondents would like to see this organisation receive ongoing funding to minimise the impacts of alcohol on the community,” he said.

AER has funded over 950 evidence based projects across Australia (30% of which are Indigenous) aimed at reducing alcohol related harm. Going forward, AER is committed to supporting evidence-based public education, prevention and treatment programs around safe alcohol use with a focus on youth. The foundation also intends to support and expand partnerships and alliances within the sector to achieve these goals.

“We need to see positive attitudinal change towards the use of alcohol. Alcohol can be enjoyed responsibly, and therefore personal and corporate responsibility continues to be at the centre of the issue. We look forward to working with Government, alcohol Industry and the community in taking these programs and messages forward” said Scott Wilson.

***AER Objectives (1 July 2007 to 30 June 2010)***

1. Prevent alcohol and other licit substance abuse, including petrol sniffing, particularly among vulnerable population groups such as indigenous Australians and youth;
2. Support evidence-based alcohol and other licit substance abuse treatment, rehabilitation, research and prevention programs;
3. Promote community education encouraging responsible consumption of alcohol and highlighting the dangers of licit substance abuse;

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**Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation (AER):** AER is a not-for-profit company established in 2001 with a mandate to 'change the way we drink'. AER was initially established with funding from a federal government grant and is now a perpetual trust. AER has built up a comprehensive understanding of the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector and is a leading grant giving body for community groups and programs within the alcohol sector. Through donations, grants and utilisation of the perpetual trust: AER seeks to prevent alcohol and licit substance abuse especially amongst disadvantaged, indigenous and young people; to support evidence-based treatment, research and prevention programs in the AOD sector; and to highlight the dangers of licit substance abuse and promote the responsible consumption of alcohol within the community. AER has funded more than 950 programs throughout Australia (30% of which are within the Indigenous community) including numerous programs which contribute to shifting community attitudes towards a responsible approach to alcohol consumption. For further information: <http://www.aerf.com.au>

**(\*\*) About the Galaxy Research:** The Galaxy study was commissioned by AER. It was part of the Galaxy Omnibus on the weekend of 12-14 September 2008. The Interviews were conducted using CATI (computer assisted telephone interviewing) with telephone numbers randomly selected from electronic White Pages. It was national survey (excluding NT) and was weighted by age, gender and location (based on ABS population estimates) to the national population. There were 1046 respondents aged 18 years and above.