

Media Statement

SHIFT IN AUSSIE ATTITUDE TO DRINKING:

80% NOW SAY WE HAVE A NATIONAL DRINKING PROBLEM,

85% WANT TO SEE MORE ACTION ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

8th May 2009: A survey into community attitudes towards alcohol reveals a significant shift in mindset towards excess drinking – with almost 80% of Australians surveyed now acknowledging we have a national drinking problem. This is a marked increase from a similar survey conducted in January 2008, when 63% of respondents over 18 years thought Australian’s drank too much.

The majority (85%) of those surveyed also believe more needs to be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol-related illness, injury and death. Further to this, 43% of Australians believe too little is spent on alcohol related harms by the Government.

Completed in April 2009, the national Galaxy research was commissioned by the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation Foundation (AER), Australia’s leading alcohol harm minimisation body.

AER Chair Scott Wilson said its early days however the swing in attitude can largely be credited to the Government’s efforts to put binge drinking on the national agenda. “Awareness is always the first step towards change, and this indicates quite a remarkable shift in awareness within little more than twelve months,” he said. “We still have a way to go in seeing this attitudinal shift translate into firm action on the part of the community, the Government, and the alcohol industry. However, it’s encouraging to finally see such widespread acknowledgement amongst the Australian public that we need to do something about our drinking problems.

“This research is a bellwether for the alcohol industry – as it reflects the views of their customers towards binge drinking. It seems clear that we are moving into a period when there is a new wave of responsibility emerging, and this change is happening on numerous levels not least of which appears to be amongst the drinking community itself,” he said.

Further findings suggest Australians believe the Government is primarily responsible for identifying and implementing solutions to drinking issues:

- 73% believed the Federal Government is responsible for helping communities that have alcohol problems;
- 67% believe the Government should regulate the marketing and advertising of alcohol products;
- 58% look to the Government to provide solutions to alcohol related violence and binge drinking.

Mr Wilson said the Alcopops tax, the National Preventative Health Taskforce and the new NHMRC Guidelines have been critical elements in raising public awareness about the dangers of alcohol abuse, and the benefits of responsible drinking.

“The \$15 billion per year health and social cost of alcohol is a significant burden, and this is unsustainable when you consider Government revenue from alcohol represents only about a quarter of this cost. Alcohol companies must also accept their share of the responsibility and help bridge this health, social and economic gap.

“Almost all respondents believe there is a collective responsibility in addressing the binge drinking problem. Overall 97% of the respondents agree that the responsibility to help communities with alcohol problems should be shared - spread across Government (Federal and State), alcohol manufacturers, alcohol retailers, individuals and the health and not-for-profit sector. AER looks forward to working with all stakeholder groups to change the way we drink to help make Australian communities healthier and safer,” said Mr Wilson.

- ends -

Media Contact:

Amanda McGregor –02 9270 0242, mb: 0411 222 311, email: amanda@launchgroup.com.au

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. The online research was conducted between 15th to 17th April 2009. 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 1030 respondents aged 18 years and above.