

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE – TUESDAY DECEMBER 23rd, 2008

ALSA MEDIA RELEASE

Vast Majority of Teens Do Not Drink Alcohol!

Dramatic reports about alcohol's harms on the community and young people in particular, have finally been questioned.

The Australian Liquor Stores Association (ALSA) acknowledges that the misuse of alcohol is a significant social issue and recognises that it is often young people who are in the public eye. However there has been a giant leap of faith by some to assume that means "most" young people (often interpreted as underage), are misusing alcohol

An analysis of the numbers released in last week's Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW) report reveals that the vast majority "around 70% of 12 to 15 year olds do not consume alcohol" and of those 30% who do get hold of some alcohol, only around 3% of males and 6.3% of females were drinking at risk monthly.

The report shows that the young females who do consume alcohol responsibly prefer measured premixed products while those who tend to drink excessively do not bother with the measured dose of alcohol and prefer to mix their own – presumably at whatever strength looks or feels right.

The AIHW findings confirm earlier ABS statistics showing the total apparent consumption of alcohol by those 15 years and over has not changed significantly in the past decade.

Importantly, this report indicates excessive use by young females has gone down and they appeared to be drinking at considerably lower risk levels in 2007 (a year before the tax hike on RTD's) versus 2001.

According to the AIHW round 90% of those minors who have experimented with alcohol have not been supplied by a licensed outlet but by a parent, friend or relative. This figure rises to 97% of 12-15 year olds where they obtain alcohol from sources other than a licensed outlet.

As demonstrated by the figures above, ALSA continues to encourage responsible marketing and consumption of alcohol, education of consumers and the drinks and retail sector with successful campaigns such as "ID-25" and "Don't Buy It For Them", to make it even more difficult for underage to access alcohol from licensed premises.

ALSA also encourages the media to balance reporting with both sides of the debate. We commend Australia's media to stand up and tell it how it is, not simply repeat the rhetoric that many other news sources have over recent years.

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