

WCTU E-Issues 2009

An email activism group of WCTU Australia Ltd.

1st Floor 15 Collins Street Melbourne, Vic.

Phone 9654 6491 Email: drugfree@net2000.com.au

Website Addresses: www.wctu.com.au; www.drugfreelifestyles.com.au; www.wowunlimited.org.au

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Welcome to E-Issues, November 27th 2009

Many of us have bought bottles of the non-alcohol sparkling grape juices, Maison, from the super markets as a drink for special occasions such as Christmas.

It has been brought to my attention that Coles and Woolworths supermarkets are no longer stocking Maison and instead have a new range of Fronti sparkling grape juice that has preservatives and artificial colouring and does not look as attractive as Maison. They do stock red and white Grapetise that has no preservatives but their range of non-alcoholic drinks is very limited. I spoke to the manager of my local Safeway(Woolworths) and he said that deleting Maison is a decision of head office.

May I suggest that you follow the links here to Woolworths Australia and also to Coles Australia and write a short message expressing your disappointment that Maison is no longer available. It is important to provide alternatives to alcohol, particularly now at the festive season. Ask them to bring Maison back.

Thanks for your help.

Anne Bergen

E-Issues Coordinator

Health researchers call for alcohol industry to prove no harm in funding of sports

Researchers are calling for a new approach to the debate over whether alcohol industry sponsorship of sports increases drinking among sports participants. They want to shift the burden of proof to the alcohol industry.

The debate over sports sponsorship saw renewed activity last year when the findings of a 2008 New Zealand study among sports participants showing that those who received alcohol industry sponsorship – especially in the form of free or discounted alcohol -- drank more heavily than those not in receipt of such sponsorship. The study received extensive media coverage, but the Portman Group (a public relations body set up by the alcohol industry) and the European Sponsorship Association (whose members include leading alcohol producers) dismissed the results, citing no causal relationship between sponsorships and alcohol misuse.

In an editorial to be published in the journal *Addiction*, researchers say that the alcohol industry should be required to prove that industry sponsorship of sports does not cause unhealthy alcohol use among adults or encourage children to drink. They argue that “it should not be left to the public to demonstrate that alcohol industry sponsorship is harmful but rather, it should be up to the proponents of the activity, i.e., the alcohol industry, to show that the practice is harmless.” Dr Kypri said that the position taken by the drinks industry is reminiscent of that taken by the tobacco companies, which until the 1990s doggedly denied that there was proof of a causal association between smoking and lung cancer. Until the industry has proved lack of harm, governments should prohibit alcohol industry sponsorship of sports.

Dr Kypri added that “The latest moves by the major sporting codes in Australia, to lobby against the regulation of alcohol sponsorship of sport, are indicative that these bodies remain in denial of alcohol-related problems in their sports. In addition, it is clear that these organisations have enormous vested interests in continuing to receive alcohol money and government should be careful to act in the public interest rather than cave in to the sports and Big Booze.”

In place of industry sponsorship, researchers suggest that governments use the proceeds from alcohol taxation to sponsor sports via an independent body. Such an approach is already in place in Australia and New Zealand, where tax revenues from tobacco sales are used to sponsor sports and other activities through publicly accountable agencies. The authors point out that this has the added advantage of providing a more equitable and accountable basis for allocating sponsorship of elite and community sport than leaving it up to the alcohol industry to decide who gets funded.

Kypri K., O'Brien K., Miller P. Time for precautionary action on alcohol industry funding of sporting bodies. *Addiction* 2009; 104: 1519-1529

For a full text copy of the article please contact:
Molly Jarvis, Editorial Manager, *Addiction*
molly@addictionjournal.org, tel +44 (0)20 7848 0014

Addiction (www.addictionjournal.org) is a monthly international scientific journal publishing more than 2000 pages every year. Owned by the Society for the Study of Addiction, it has been in continuous publication since 1884. *Addiction* is the top journal in the field of substance abuse and is number one in the 2008 ISI Journal Citation Reports © Ranking in the Substance Abuse Category. *Addiction* publishes peer-reviewed research reports on alcohol, illicit drugs and tobacco, bringing together research conducted within many different disciplines, as well as editorials and other debate pieces.

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Welcome to E-Issues, November 2009

Gambling and its effect on families is one issue about which WCTU has a concern.

In July 2009, all state and federal gambling departments agreed upon a number of National Principles. The first National Principle stated that children should not be exposed to pokie gambling within pokie venues. Coles have committed to implementing all the National Principles in their 70+ pubs. Unfortunately, it seems that Woolworths intends to continue to lure families with children inside their pokie pubs.

Now let's urge Woolworths to adopt the National Principles and remove children from the sights and sounds of pokie gambling.

You could help by signing the on-line petition by clicking on www.PokieAct.org then go to the tab that says petition.

Thank you for your help. Feel free to forward this through your email networks.

Anne Bergen

E-Issues Coordinator

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An email lobby group of WCTU Drug-Free Lifestyles
1st Floor 15 Collins Street Melbourne, 3000
Ph. 9654 6491; Fax. 9650 2890; E-mail drugfree@net2000.com.au
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Topic: Funding of School Chaplains

"Chaplaincy in Australian government schools is making a major contribution to school morale; it is proactive, unique, effective and important. Government project funding should be continued when the three year cycle of project funding ends." These were some of the sentiments of 98% of principals who took part in Australia's first ever national research project on "The effectiveness of National School Chaplaincy Association (NSCA) Chaplains in Government Schools in Australia".

The Federal Government is currently discussing, and will decide in the near future (early to mid-November) whether to roll over, extend or cut funding for chaplaincy in government schools. You can add your support of chaplaincy programs continuing across Australia by writing an email as guided by the website link at <http://support.schoolchaplaincy.org.au/index.php#emailform>

Please send an email urging continued funding for chaplains and encourage others to do so too.

Anne Bergen

**National Corresponding Secretary, WCTU of Australia
E-Issues Coordinator**

12 October 2009

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Welcome to E-Issues, October 2009.

The Melbourne Herald-Sun of Sunday, October 11th, has begun a campaign to raise discussion about the possibility of reducing the BAC for Victorian drivers from 0.05 to 0.02.

If you live in Victoria, please send a brief email to the Victorian Transport Minister, The Hon. Tim Pallas, (tim.pallas@parliament.vic.gov.au) and to your local Member of the Victorian Parliament (get their email address by typing "Parliament of Victoria Australia" into Google).

In your email you could:

- congratulate the Government on the reduction to the road toll that has occurred in recent years
- congratulate the Government on extending the zero BAC for young drivers for an additional year as part of its new Graduated Licensing Scheme effective from July 2008.
- urge them to seriously consider lowering the BAC for drivers to 0.02 as soon as possible.

Include one or two pieces of the following information and/or your own ideas.:

According to the World Health Organization's Traffic Accident Commission

- alcohol starts to impair driving at 0.02
- drivers between 0.02 and 0.05 are less likely to see moving lights correctly, finding it harder to judge distances and risk-taking increases.
- Norway, Sweden and Poland already have a drink-driving limit of 0.02.
- New figures reveal 39 Victorians have been killed in accidents involving drivers with blood alcohol levels under 0.05 in the past five years.

If you do not live in Victoria you could email your local State MP and urge them to raise this issue in their parliament.

Thanks for your interest and action.

Anne Bergen

**National Corresponding Secretary, WCTU of Australia
E-Issues Coordinator**

12 October 2009

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There is a bill proposing same sex marriage - "Marriage Equality Bill" - before the Senate in the Federal Parliament. The bill aims to destroy the traditional, common sense definition of marriage in law as only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.

The Senate Committee has called for submissions so I urge you to make a submission to this Senate Committee by **Friday 28th August. Please do it now!**

Your submission is a golden opportunity to make a big difference in influencing our culture for good.

All you need to do is:

- Send a short email by Friday 28 August to: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au
- In the subject line at the top, put "Marriage Equality Bill".
- Address it to: The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.
- In the email itself, write your message but use your own words. It can be detailed, or very simple, such as:

EXAMPLE:

To the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

I oppose the Marriage Equality Bill 2009 because it would completely change the meaning marriage has had throughout history. Marriage between a man and a woman is vital for raising children, who need both a mum and a dad.

- Include your name and street address, with postcode.
- Click "send".

Thank you for taking a few moments to try to protect our God-given and common sense institution of marriage as between one man and one woman where children can be nurtured by both a father and mother.

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Coordinator

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You will probably have heard that the Australian Government recently finally passed its legislation to increase the tax on "alcopops". It was disappointing to note that Senator Steve Fielding voted against the Bill in spite of efforts by WCTU and other health groups to persuade him to support it. In the end, his vote didn't matter as all the other Senators voted in favour.

Thank you to those who have prayed and sent emails on the alcopops issue.

You could send a brief email to the Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, to thank her for persevering with the alcopops tax. You could also point out that, while it is an important step in trying to reduce youth binge drinking, there is much more that needs to be done.

Her email is: Nicola.Roxon.MP@aph.gov.au

The following are resolutions regarding alcohol policy that were passed at the recent National WCTU Convention. They are an indication of other action we would like the government to take. You could mention one or two of them.

ALCOHOL

1. That alcohol taxation be levied according to the alcohol percentage content.
2. That all alcohol advertising and sponsorships of sports, be phased out as soon as possible.
3. That the legal age for alcohol consumption be raised to 21 years.
4. That strong opposition be made to limit liquor outlets from increasing their opening hours.
5. That stricter controls be implemented regarding the issue of new liquor licenses.
6. That the BAC for all drivers be zero. [Asking for a reduction of the .05 BAC for drivers to .02 is probably a more realistic request.] Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner, Stephen Fontana, was recently reported as calling for .02 BAC. He is one of several pushing for this change.
7. That labelling on alcoholic beverages include warning messages such as:
 - a. Alcohol may cause birth defects
 - b. Don't drink and drive.

Thank you again for your support.

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The following Topic Paper was prepared by Miss Mavis Gerrish, the National WCTU Director of Education and Research, for your information and prayer.

The Federal Government's Preventative Health Taskforce will most probably have handed down its recommendation on the introduction of plain packaging restrictions for cigarettes by the time you receive this.

However, we can all pray regarding the outcome.

This information was presented in the ABC Lateline Programme by Tony Jones with Reporter Steve Cannane in June.

Could Australia be the first country in the world to bring in plain packaging for cigarettes?

That's one of the recommendations expected to be handed to the Federal Government. With the ban on cigarette advertising in place, anti-smoking activists argue that the packet itself is the last place that tobacco companies can market their brand. If plain packaging is introduced the Federal Government can expect a High Court challenge from the tobacco industry, an industry that is not shy when it comes to protecting its business.

Professor Greg Craven, Australian Catholic University, expert in Constitutional Law says that tobacco companies are superb litigants. They use their lawyers extraordinarily well, naturally prepared to defend their business and spend a great deal of money. However, despite the quality of their lawyers, Professor Craven thinks that the tobacco industry would struggle to convince the High Court that plain packaging would violate international trade law or be an unfair acquisition of property.

Professor Simon Chapman of Sydney University suggests that beautifully designed boxes are designed to appeal to young people. Australia is the first country to ban tobacco advertising, smoking in the workplace and put retail packs off display. 163 countries have signed the framework convention on tobacco control to try and dramatically reduce tobacco use around the world.

Let us all pray for the success of this recommendation to Federal Government and the ultimate reduction of the effects on the health and cost of this addiction in the community.

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Coordinator

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Hope is rising ~ create a butterfly!

In the year 2009, you'd think governments would have well and truly faced up to the atrocities of World War II. But for all the monuments to all the soldiers and all the history recorded in books and films - there remains a group of living, breathing survivors whose suffering has never been acknowledged; whose stories remain buried under layers of shame and outright denial by those responsible.

They are women from around the Asia Pacific and beyond who were kidnapped and held in sexual slavery by the Japanese military. Some for months, some for years. Of the estimated 200,000 Korean, Filipina, Malaysian, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indonesian, East Timorese, Japanese and Dutch women and girls subjected to the torture of repeated rapes and beatings, only a few are still alive today.

With your help, they will finally have recognition, and the opportunity for closure.

Create your own beautiful message of solidarity for these courageous survivors, and call for a Government motion to compensate them:

<http://www.amnesty.org.au/comfort>

The Japanese military called them "comfort women". We call them survivors of the highest courage and humility. Innocent civilians who endured untold physical and psychological trauma; who've endured more than 60 years without so much as an official apology - let alone compensation - from the Japanese Government.

Now we're seeing one of the biggest efforts yet to finally achieve formal recognition and reparations, after decades of denials and dodging responsibility. In all this time, Australia is one of the few Allied countries that hasn't stood up and called the Japanese Government to account. With your help, we can change this.

The survivors' chosen symbol is the butterfly - a unique and beautiful creature that has the power to fly above their suffering. That's why we're asking you to create your own butterfly, to be sent to our own Prime Minister and shared around the world on your social networks. With an outpouring of support at this crucial time, we can get the Australian Government to pass a motion urging the Japanese authorities to recognise and compensate survivors.

It's a simple and striking way to take a stand, and finally shine a light of justice and hope on dark acts hidden in silence and shame for generations. Send your butterfly to Kevin Rudd, and we'll amplify your message here at home and abroad - ensuring the survivors we're in contact with know of your personal messages of hope and solidarity:

In their company, you realise the sweetest smile of an elderly woman can conceal memories of unspeakable suffering, and reveal depths of unfathomable strength. Let's give them an outpouring of support the world will not forget. Send your butterfly today:

PS: Australian Jan Ruff O'Herne was just 19 years old and interned with her family in Java when she was forcibly moved to a Japanese military brothel, and raped repeatedly for months. Ms O'Herne has been campaigning an awfully long time for justice, including testifying before the US Congress. Stand with her now. Read an article about her story:

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/abe-ignores-evidence-say-australias-comfort-women/2007/03/02/1172338881441.html>

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At the recent National Convention in Adelaide it was decided that WCTU would support Fair Trade products if you use these commodities whenever possible.

Half of the world's population live on \$2 per day. The average coffee grower only receives 10 -15c per kg. Fair Trade growers receive about \$3.50 so they can have better education and living standards and improve their community. 70% of cocoa is produced in Ghana by virtual slave labour, including child labour.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Become familiar with the Fair Trade logo. All Fair Trade products will carry this logo.
- Email [Woolworths](#) and [Coles Supermarkets](#), thanking them for stocking some Fair Trade products, and urging them to stock a larger range. Just follow the hyperlinks above to get their websites which have a customer email feedback facility.
- Email [Cadbury](#) and congratulate them on their plans to use Fair Trade cocoa for Cadbury Dairy Milk by end of the UK Summer of 2009. According to their website, the move will result in the tripling of sales of cocoa under Fairtrade terms for cocoa farmers in Ghana, both increasing Fairtrade cocoa sales for existing certified farming groups, as well as potentially opening up new opportunities for thousands more farmers to benefit from the Fairtrade system. However, the company has so far committed to the Fairtrade certification of Cadbury Dairy Milk for the British and Irish markets only. Please urge them to also use Fair Trade cocoa in their Australian chocolates.
- Support Fair Trade by buying their products and encouraging your family and friends to do so too. These products are a bit more expensive but it is something practical we can do that will make a difference to the lives of many families in developing countries. If people do not buy these products, supermarkets will not continue to stock them.



I have emailed Woolworths, Coles and IGA.

- IGA says it supports Fair Trade but that it is up to each supermarket to implement it. Talk to your local IGA about this.
- Woolworths has not yet responded but the products listed below are probably on their shelves. If not, ask them why not.
- Coles replied promptly with a list of Fair Trade products that its supermarkets have, usually on the top shelves. I checked the list at my local Coles supermarket and found the following:
- SCARBOROUGH FAIR ORGANIC COFFEE DARK - 200 GRAM
- SCARBOROUGH FAIR ORGANIC COFFEE GROUND MEDIUM – 200 GRAM
- SCARBOROUGH FAIR TEA ENGLISH BREAKFAST
- SCARBOROUGH FAIR TEA GREEN ORGANIC – 20 PACK

- NERADA ORGANIC TEA BAGS CAMOMILE – 40 PACK
- NERADA ORGANIC TEA BAGS CHAI – 50 PACK
- NERADA ORGANIC TEA BAGS GREEN DECAF – 50 PACK
- NERADA ORGANIC TEA BAGS PEPPERMINT – 40 PACK
- NERADA ORGANIC TEA BAGS ROOIBOS VANILLA – 50 PACK
- NERADA ORGANIC TEA BAGS ROSEHIP – 40 PACK
- NERADA ORGANIC TEA BAGS WHITE – 50 PACK
- NERADA ORGANIC TEA GREEN LEMON MYRTLE – 50 PACK
- NERADA TEA BAGS ORGANIC – 50 PACK
- GREEN & BLACKS ORGANIC CHOCOLATE DARK – 100 GRAM
- GREEN & BLACKS ORGANIC CHOCOLATE MAYA – 100 GRAM
- GREEN & BLACKS ORGANIC CHOCOLATE MILK – 100 GRAM
- COLES FINEST 200GRAM COFFEE BEANS ETHIOPIAN - 200 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS COFFEE BAGS ITALIAN ESPRESSO – 28 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS COFFEE FREEZE DRIED – 200 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS EARTH BLENDS COFFEE FREEZE DRIED – 90 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS FREEZE DRIED – 100 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS FREEZE DRIED DECAF – 90 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS GRANULATED COFFEE – 100 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS GRANULATED COFFEE – 200 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS GRANULATED INSTANT COFFEE CAN – 500 GRAM
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIV SERVE COFFEE BAGS COLUMBIA DARK ROAST – 18 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIV SERVE COFFEE BAGS ITALIAN EXPR – 18 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIV SERVE COFFEE BAGS ITALIAN EXPR - 8 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIV SERVE COFFEE BAGS MOCHA KENYA – 18 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIV SERVE COFFEE BAGS ROYAL SPEC – 18 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIV SERVE COFFEE BAGS ROYAL SPEC – 8 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIV SERVE MOCHA KENYA – 28 PACK
- ROBERT TIMMS INDIVIDUAL SERVE COFFEE BAGS DECAF – 18 PACK
- COCOLO PREMIUM DARK MINT CRISP CHOCOLATE – 100 GRAM
- COCOLO PREMIUM ORGANIC CHOCOLATE 70% COCOA – 100 GRAM
- COCOLO PREMIUM ORGANIC CHOCOLATE DARK ORANGE – 100 GRAM
- COCOLO PREMIUM ORGANIC CHOCOLATE MILK CHOCOLATE – 100 GRAM
- GREEN AND BLACKS WHITE CHOCOLATE – 100 GRAM

They had a range of MADURA teas on the list but these did not have the Fair Trade logo.

In addition, I found other Fair Trade products on the shelf -

- Clipper Organic Freeze-Dried Arabica Coffee
- Global Cafe Direct Organic Coffee (4 varieties)
- Nature's Cuppa Organic Ceylon Tea 50 bags and loose

Thank you for supporting this campaign.

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Coordinator

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UPDATE RE INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR FIELDING'S CHIEF OF STAFF

Last Monday afternoon (May 4) Ellen Chandler and I had an interview with Susan Head, Senator Steve Fielding's Chief of Staff, to put a case as to why he should vote for the alcopops tax when it comes before Parliament again this week. We had a reasonable hearing although she was more interested in telling us why he won't vote for the tax, than hearing what we had to say about why he should vote for it. We tried to get our points across and left some information with her. (See report below)

Susan Head claims that Steve Fielding is our best ally in Parliament and wants to see a culture change regarding binge drinking. However, they believe that if the alcopops tax is passed, the government will feel that it has done its bit and nothing more will happen. He is particularly concerned to break the link between alcohol advertising and sport but the government won't act on this.

We also want more action than just the alcopops tax but think that we have to win the battles one at a time. We gave her one of our postcards addressed to the Prime Minister, that lists some of the other measures we think are important and she was impressed.

Following this interview I emailed a secretary in the office of the Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, with whom I had previous contact, urging the government to sit down with Steve Fielding and negotiate to agree to other measures to get his vote. I have not had any response.

Please continue to pray that the government will take the problem of binge drinking seriously and take effective action to change the drinking culture in Australia and that Steve Fielding may change his mind and vote for the alcopops tax.

Report on Appointment with Senator Steve Fielding's Chief of Staff, Susan Head, by Mrs. Anne Bergen, Corresponding Secretary, National Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia, Ltd. and Mrs. Ellen Chandler, President, National WCTU of Australia, Ltd Monday 4th May, 2009.

- We congratulate Senator Fielding on his attempt to introduce his "Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill" in 2008. We made supporting submissions to the Senate Committee.
- We support and commend his efforts to persuade the Government to cut the link between alcohol and sport by banning alcohol advertisements connected to sport.

- We found his refusal to support the alcopops tax legislation incomprehensible – also his statement that by opposing it, Family First has broken the hold of the liquor industry on the Australian community. How can this be?
- In fact, Senator Fielding lined up with Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia (DSICA) and others in the liquor industry, against the advice of Australia's leading alcohol researchers and health and medical authorities. Does he really believe that the Distillers have the well-being of young drinkers at heart or are they just trying to maintain their profits regardless of the harm their RTDs are doing?
- He couldn't persuade the government to agree to his proposed advertising bans and that is disappointing. However, by voting against the tax, he also sabotaged the extra \$50mill of new funding for useful projects to curb binge drinking, that was negotiated by the Greens and Senator Xenophon. He “threw the baby out with the bathwater”.

Why should Senator Fielding vote for the increased RTD tax?

- There has been a huge increase in the consumption of RTDs since the previous government lowered taxes on them in 2001. (See DSICA graph in the Coalition's dissenting report to Senate Community Affairs Committee Report– Note that this graph only shows **adult** per capita consumption and therefore doesn't include the main RTD consumers – teenage girls.) The Senate Community Affairs Committee's Report on RTDs (4.79) states that there was an increase in consumption of more than 450% between 1997 and 2006. In 2006 Australia's consumption of RTDs in litres per person was 14 compared with 2 in the USA and far ahead of other comparable countries.
- RTDs are specifically designed to appeal to young people, especially girls by being sweet, pretty and with the alcohol taste masked. Despite the usual denials by manufacturers, the Age last year reported the statement by alcohol marketing executive, Matt Baxter, that there was “a conscious effort to make these drinks more appealing to young people.”
- Young people are particularly vulnerable to harm from alcohol consumption because their brains are not fully mature until age 25, and women's bodies cannot handle alcohol as well as men's but they try to keep up with men.
- Young people are more price sensitive than older ones so higher prices will reduce their consumption.
- The Senate Community Affairs Committee Report (4.88) concluded that each action that reduces problematic drinking among young people makes a contribution in public health terms. While only one such measure, the alcopops tax increase is an important step. Much more needs to be done but we need to do what we can a step at a time.
- The alcopops tax has been successful in reducing consumption of RTDs and overall alcohol consumption. Various figures are around from a number of sources for different time periods but, even taking into account a switch to other alcoholic drinks by some people, to January 2009 their has been around a 30% drop in sales of RTDs and at least 31million less standard drinks consumed (some sources put this as 64 million; another 155 million). This should translate to a lot less intoxication.

Senator Fielding believes that the alcopops tax has not succeeded because the rate of hospital admissions for young people with alcohol dependence has not significantly decreased. We believe that this is faulty reasoning because:

- The Access Economics research on which this information was based was:
 - paid for by DSICA
 - based on preliminary and unreliable figures.
- **Those admitted to hospital with alcohol dependence** have developed their condition over a number of years of heavy drinking and this is unrelated to recent changes in the consumption of RTDs. They **are hard-core drinkers**.
- **RTDs are the drink of choice especially of teenage girls who are beginning to drink** because they are sweet, attractively packaged and don't taste like alcohol. With their spirits base (rum, vodka, whisky, etc.) they introduce these young people to spirits which are the most dangerous alcoholic drinks because of their strength. The argument that the increased tax just causes them to buy spirits and mix their own drinks misses the point that young girls would not be thinking of using spirits if they had not first tried RTDs. **For many young people RTDs are the gateway to spirits and other alcoholic drinks. These are not the people who will be admitted to hospital with alcohol dependence - Yet.**
- **Teenagers are more sensitive to price than older drinkers so the increased price is a deterrent for some.** Any measure that will delay the drinking of alcohol by young people is worth doing because their brains are not mature until about 25 years of age and are therefore more susceptible to harm from alcohol consumption during teen years. **It is the young beginning drinkers, especially girls, that will be most helped by the alcopops tax.**

We therefore urge Senator Fielding to change his mind and vote for the increased tax on alcopops (RTDs) when it is reintroduced to Parliament shortly.

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Coordinator

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You will probably be aware that the Government is planning to reintroduce the 'alcopops' tax legislation shortly with the Budget and that Family First Senator, Steve Fielding, whose votes is crucial to the passing of this tax, is still intending to vote against it. In previous E-Issues bulletins I have asked you to email him and urge him to vote in favour of the alcopops tax. However, I have spoken to people in Steve Fielding's office and it appears that he receives 1000s of emails each week and it is likely that he doesn't read most of them.

Our greatest hope of changing his mind is prayer so I am asking that you pray that he will reconsider the facts and change his mind and vote for this tax that is supported by the AMA and many groups that are concerned about the welfare of young people.

I have arranged a personal appointment with Steve Fielding's chief of staff for this coming Monday afternoon (May 4). Please also pray that I will have the right things to say and that I may be able to influence his decision.

Thank you for your support on this important matter.

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Coordinator

WCTU E-Issues

An email lobby group of WCTU Drug-Free Lifestyles
1st Floor 15 Collins Street Melbourne, 3000
Ph. 9654 6491; Fax. 9650 2890; E-mail drugfree@net2000.com.au
Website: www.drugfreelifestyles.com.au

It was very disappointing this week that Senator Steve Fielding chose to vote against the alcopops tax increase, along with the Opposition, and thus defeat the Bill even although the Greens and Nick Xenophon had negotiated a useful package of other measures to fight binge drinking in return for their votes.

May I suggest that, if you have sent emails in the past to these senators regarding voting for the alcopops tax, you might like to email them again. Thank the Greens and Nick Xenophon for their support and politely, but firmly, express your disappointment, incredulity, amazement, etc. to Steve Fielding at his continued opposition. You could commend Steve Fielding for trying to get alcohol ads out of sporting events but suggest that he should have been willing to leave that for another time and accept the measures that could have been gained.

Email addresses: Greens:

senator.bob.brown@aph.gov.au
senator.siewert@aph.gov.au

Family First:

senator.fielding@aph.gov.au

Senator Nick Xenophon and the other Greens Senators have online contact forms.
Google "Parliament of Australia" and click on Senators' Home Pages

There is a letter in today's Age regarding the alcopops issue. It says that cutting the alcohol content to 3% is the answer (we have been suggesting it) as in the 1980s the fad was wine coolers that were so popular that the number of brands grew to more than 60. Teenagers discovered it was a good way of getting drunk and consumed it in voluminous amounts. When the alcohol content was reduced from 6% to 3% the drink's attraction vanished as it became too expensive for teenagers to wipe themselves out. The letter writer believes that only one brand remains.

So some sentiments that could be expressed are pushing for the reduction of their alcohol content, and a volumetric taxation of all alcohol at a higher rate.

Thank you for your support.

Anne Bergen

**National Corresponding Secretary, WCTU of Australia
E-Issues Coordinator**

20 March 2009

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Phone 9654 6491 Email: drugfree@net2000.com.au

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Welcome to the first E-Issues bulletin for 2009.

The government has introduced legislation to legalise its "Alcopops" tax - the higher tax on ready mixed spirits based drinks.

The Coalition is opposing it so the government is depending on support from the Greens, Family First's Steve Fielding, and Independent, Nick Xenophon. Media reports suggest that Steve Fielding will support the tax but that the others are undecided.

Reasons why the tax should be passed include:

- The tax has reduced consumption of spirits, especially of alcopops favoured by young people. Health Minister, Nicola Roxon said tax office figures from the first nine months of the tax hike showed alcopops sales dropped by 35 per cent compared with the previous year. While sales of full strength spirits climbed slightly, overall spirit sales fell by almost eight per cent, she said.
- If the tax is not passed, the price of alcopops will go down and sales will rise again. The connection between price and consumption and alcohol-related harm is well known.
- The tax is only one of a number of measures the government needs to take to reduce alcohol consumption in Australia, especially among young people where the problems are great, but it is an important part of a multi-pronged strategy.

What you can do:

- Send a short email to these people and urge them to support the tax.
 - senator.fielding@aph.gov.au
 - senator.bob.brown@aph.gov.au
 - Nick Xenophon has an email message space on his homepage.
- Pray that the Bill will be passed.

Thank you for your support.

Anne Bergen
E-Issues Coordinator