

Submission to Senate Enquiry into an Act-

ALCOHOL TOLL REDUCTION ACT 2007

To Members of Senate Enquiry;

I make this submission from the personal viewpoint of a lifetime as a general surgeon in our community, and in numerous countries around the world, now retired.

From the time I worked in the Emergency Departments of our Public Hospitals from 1959, I have observed at first-hand the carnage, both mental, social and physical that result from inappropriate use of the most widespread and dangerous drug of our time – alcohol.

It is widely recognized today that alcohol misuse, as reported by the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, is responsible for more treatment referrals than any other drug and the culture of binge-drinking amongst young people of our day is increasing at an alarming rate. It would seem unnecessary to continue to list the many other aspects of damage to life and limb and mind that are now clearly tabulated.

What is being done? This Bill is a step in the right direction as an educational tool and a limited thrust to combat the advertising that must be responsible for so much of the present misuse. The power of the media and advertising is clearly recognized by the huge resources put into such activities by the alcohol industry. These must be curtailed and this Bill has great potential. Personally, I would like to see all alcohol advertising on TV banned before 12mn. Please consider the number of young people who watch major sporting events to a much later hour.

I also have a personal concern about the marketing of alcoholic mixtures that resemble soft drinks . The addition of clear health warnings on such drinks would provide some safety but the packaging could be also regulated by appropriate restrictions included in this Bill.

Have our politicians the gumption to stand up against the huge resources of the alcohol industry? Now is the opportunity to answer this question.

Yours Sincerely

William Alan Ramsay MBBS. FRACS. DTM&H.