

Media Release

EXPOSED - ALCOHOL INDUSTRY'S TOBACCO TACTICS

11 October 2013: The alcohol industry is using measures straight out of big tobacco's playbook in order to delay the introduction of mandatory warning labels, according to the international scientific journal, *Addiction*.

Published today, the peer-reviewed journal article warns that the alcohol industry's false claims, fear mongering and undue political influence continue to undermine alcohol control policy in Australia.

The first detailed analysis of its kind, the article found the alcohol industry is now employing exactly the same strategies big tobacco used to delay the introduction of health warning labels.

Strategies include falsely disputing the evidence and rationale for labelling, outrageous and alarmist claims of negative impacts on public health and the economy, and lobbying and seeking political influence through large political donations.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says aggressive campaigning by the alcohol industry was instrumental in delaying the introduction of mandatory alcohol health warning labels in Australia.

"What we are seeing from the alcohol industry is a pattern of obstruction, falsehood and outrageousness copied straight from big tobacco's play book. When it recognised government might still move ahead on warning labels, it quickly rallied its own front organisation, DrinkWise, to counter with their own weak and ineffective consumer messages in the hope that it could block the introduction of an effective Government mandated scheme," Mr Thorn said.

Years earlier, the tobacco industry manoeuvred in an identical fashion in an attempt to weaken the text on tobacco warning labels and strenuously avoid disease specific warnings, as made clear in correspondence between British American Tobacco and British Tobacco Australia.

"Obviously no one in the industry would favour the introduction of warnings...A vague statement such as 'Cigarette smoking may be harmful to health' is a lot easier to live with than something more specific such as 'Excessive cigarette smoking is associated with an increased risk of death from lung cancer.'"

Article lead author, Rebecca Mathews, says there is a history of alcohol industry opposition to effective policy.

“This is not the first time the industry has opposed effective health policy measures, it campaigned against Random Breath Testing in the 1970’s, and more recently, opposed the introduction of a minimum price on alcohol,” Ms Mathews said.

Mr Thorn says the Addiction article catalogues the alcohol industry’s success, in delaying effective alcohol policy and highlights the significant deficiencies of industry self-regulation.

“The alcohol industry has made it clear by its actions that it has no genuine interest in promoting a healthier and safer Australia. Using the same dirty tricks as big tobacco, it has up until now, been successful in opposing and obstructing effective policies that would save lives and reduce harms, in order to protect sales and profits. The alcohol industry’s behaviour can’t be allowed to continue,” Mr Thorn said.

Article: [*Is the alcohol industry delaying government action on alcohol health warning labels in Australia?*](#)

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Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) FARE is an independent, charitable organisation working to prevent the harmful use of alcohol in Australia. Since 2001, FARE has invested over \$115 million in research and community projects to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse on Australians. Through its national grants program and commissioned research, FARE has established itself as a leading voice on alcohol and other drugs issues. FARE works with community groups, all levels of government, police, emergency workers, research institutions and the private sector to address alcohol-related problems. For further information visit FARE’s website: www.fare.org.au