

Alcohol lobby ploughs \$1.3 million into political parties

1 February 2024:

Companies that profit from alcoholic products and their lobby groups donated more than \$1.3 million to Australia's major political parties in the last financial year, including large sums from groups lobbying for cuts to alcohol taxation.

The latest disclosures bring alcohol-related donations to the major parties to a total of \$16.3 million over the last decade.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive Caterina Giorgi said the figures, disclosed to the Australian Electoral Commission and published today, highlighted the need for a ban on alcohol donations.

"When alcohol companies are allowed to donate large amounts to political parties, it creates a power imbalance, giving these companies greater access to politicians than the members of the community that they are elected to represent," Ms Giorgi said.

Research has shown that political donations enable alcohol lobbyists to build long-term relationships with politicians and influence short-term decision making in their favour.

"A ban on alcohol donations needs to be part of transparency reforms to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of the community is placed ahead of the interests of these companies," Ms Giorgi said.

"The Labor and Liberal parties exclude tobacco donations and could extend this ban to companies that profit from alcohol, which causes harm to far too many Australians."

Alcohol companies and their lobby groups donated \$1.325 million to the Labor, Liberal and National parties in 2022-23, made up of \$874,000 worth of donations from the alcohol industry and \$450,000 from alcohol and gambling entities. These amounts were split evenly between the Labor and Liberal/National parties.

The largest alcohol-related donations came from the Australian Hotels Association and Queensland Hotels Association, which together donated \$319,869.

Coles, which owns Liquorland and is Australia's second biggest alcohol retailer, disclosed \$181,500 worth of donations.

Endeavour Group, the nation's largest alcohol retailer, disclosed \$169,546 in its first year of donations after spinning off from Woolworths (which still holds a 9.1% stake) in 2021.

Multinational beer giants Lion Limited and Asahi Beverages donated \$148,325 and \$126,000 respectively, while Spirits and Cocktails Australia donated \$77,500, at a time when SCA and the Brewers Association have ramped up their calls for beer and spirits tax cuts.

FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi is available for interview.

Media contact:

Dana Daniel

media@fare.org.au

0429 291 120

The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education** (FARE) is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We do this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion campaigns.

FARE has been working with communities across the country to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians for 20 years. To learn more about us and our work visit www.fare.org.au.