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**NATIONAL ALCOHOL STRATEGY A MISSED CHANCE TO INCLUDE  
VOLUMETRIC TAX**

The announcement that the National Alcohol Strategy 2019–2028 (the NAS) has been agreed to by all States and Territories is welcome, but it is disappointing that it does not include a volumetric tax on alcohol, AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

“The last iteration of the NAS expired in 2011, so this announcement has been a long time coming,” Dr Bartone said.

“The AMA supports the positive announcements by the Government to reduce the misuse of alcohol. However, they simply do not go far enough.

“An incredibly serious problem in our community needs an equally serious and determined response.

“Doctors are at the front line in dealing with the devastating effects of excessive alcohol consumption. They treat the fractured jaws, the facial lacerations, the eye and head injuries that can occur as a result of excessive drinking.

“Doctors, and those working in hospitals and ambulance services, see the deaths and life-long injuries sustained from car accidents and violence fuelled by alcohol consumption.

“Healthcare staff, including doctors, often bear the brunt of alcohol-fuelled violence in treatment settings. Alcohol and other drugs in combination are often a deadly cocktail.

“Prolonged excessive amounts contribute to liver and heart disease, and alcohol is also implicated in certain cancers.

“All measures that reduce alcohol-fuelled violence and the harm caused by the misuse of alcohol, including taxing all products according to their alcohol content, should be considered in a national strategy.

“For this reason, we are extremely disappointed that the Government has ruled out considering a volumetric tax on alcohol.

“A national, coordinated approach to alcohol policy will significantly improve efforts to reduce harm.

“Alcohol places an enormous burden on our healthcare resources on our society and ultimately on us as a nation.

“Alcohol is currently the sixth leading contributor to the burden of disease in Australia, as well as costing Australian taxpayers an estimated \$14 billion annually in social costs.

“The AMA has previously outlined the priorities we would like to see reflected in the Strategy, including action on awareness, taxation, marketing, and prevention and treatment services.

“Implementing effective and practical measures that reduce harms associated with alcohol misuse will benefit all Australians.”

## Background

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that alcohol and illicit drug use were the two leading risk factors for disease burden in males aged 15-44 in 2011.
  - The AIHW has linked alcohol use to 26 diseases and injuries, including six types of cancer, four cardiovascular diseases, chronic liver disease, and pancreatitis, and estimated that in 2013 the social costs of alcohol abuse in Australia was more than \$14 billion.
  - A study conducted by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine in 2014 found that during peak alcohol drinking times, such as the weekend, up to one in eight hospital patients were there because of alcohol-related injuries or medical conditions. The report noted that the sheer volume of alcohol-affected patients created more disruption to Emergency Departments than those patients affected by ice.
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