

Reference number CR1783

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| <p>With regard to the Review Panel's duty of care to the community, I am very surprised the draft report has not canvassed, in a comprehensive way, the relationship between the public benefit, the massive negative impact of the ubiquitous alcohol industry, and competition policy.</p> <p>The rationale for competition policy reform in this area is compelling. The terms of reference for the review allow consideration of this relationship. All parties agree that the public benefit is paramount when considering competition policy. Of all drugs, legal and illegal, alcohol creates the greatest damage to our people and communities in absolute terms. This highly dangerous drug is ubiquitous in our society. Nationally the negative impact of alcohol has been estimated at \$36 billion per annum (http://www.fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/24-08-10-Cost-of-Alcohol-Misuse-Goes-Beyond-the-Drinker.pdf). Scarcely a day goes by when somewhere across the pages of our newspapers some tragic event featuring alcohol doesn't feature. Around the world the evidence is overwhelming that control of supply and price of alcohol is effective and leads to an overall public benefit. An international overview of the policy contest from the public benefit perspective can be! found at http://eucam.info/</p> <p>The Review Panel's duty of care mandates consideration of this relationship.</p> <p>The current Australian competition policy approach clearly favours the alcohol industry i.e. 'authorisations' requiring proof of public benefit are required for each supply and price control arrangement in cases where state legislation doesn't enable exemption. Simply put, despite the overwhelming evidence of negative impact alcohol is treated as if its impact was benign. This lop-sided playing field is an inefficient arrangement consistent with industry capture of legislation, regulation and enforcement through decades of substantial political donations. The public registers of Australia's electoral commissions show that millions of dollars have flowed, and continue to flow, to the major political parties from rent-seeking alcohol and related organisations.</p> <p>The Panel should recommend reform to remove the current inefficient case by case basis and empower national, state, territory and local governments to impose marketing, supply and price controls on alcohol. By doing so the Panel would be demonstrating leadership in its duty of care. If enhancing the welfare of Australians and protecting consumers are the basis of the object of the legislation, then surely this is also the goal of the Review.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback.</p> |