

22 November 2010

Consultation Officer  
Community Sponsorship Fund  
Department of Health and Ageing  
GPO Box 9848  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Response to Community Sponsorship Fund Consultation Paper**

The following response is provided by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) as the peak representative body for the nation's winemakers.

We have addressed the specific issues below. However, as a general comment we are concerned that the questions and objectives appear to assume that the only way to deal with alcohol-related problems is to completely remove alcohol from the picture, which is both unrealistic and unfair. There is no evidence to back such an approach.

WFA supports all efforts to address Australia's binge drinking culture through education. However, we strongly believe alcohol, and particularly wine, has a legitimate and accepted place in modern society when consumed in moderation by those of legal drinking age.

**Response to Questions**

***For the purposes of eligibility criteria for the Community Sponsorship Fund, should the definition of 'alcohol industry' include community-based licensee sponsorships and 'in-kind' sponsorship arrangements?***

The clear answer to this question is "no". To suggest that sponsorship from local wineries, hotels, clubs or restaurants is somehow tainted because there is an alcohol link to some or all of what they do demeans their motives.

In many smaller communities such businesses are the lifeblood of a town and often the only sources of potential sponsorship; their support is neither offered nor accepted just because it involves alcohol.

Do we really want the Community Sponsorship Fund to operate on the basis that an art gallery is worthy of support if it serves lemonade at an opening but not if it offers chardonnay provided by a local winery? Similarly, is it sensible to say support for an adult education program should be dependent on whether or not it accepts an offer to use a room in the local hotel (provided through in-kind support) for classes?

One of the Australian Government's goals has been social inclusion. Excluding community groups from any engagement or involvement with the local businesses because they have an alcohol link is likely to lead to great social welfare loss.

***Should organisations that receive 'alcohol sponsorship' be required to remove all alcohol branding imagery e.g. from uniforms, venues?***

This appears to be beyond the brief of the Community Sponsorship Fund. In its response to the Preventative Health Task Force report *Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020*, the

Australian Government stated that it supported limiting the exposure of children to advertising that may unduly influence them but would not consider regulatory action at this time.

Even without this statement, the answer to the question must be “no”. There is no evidence to suggest logos on uniforms, programs or other materials encourage people associated with a sponsored organisation or event to drink to excess or romanticise an association with alcohol.

Banning logos may dissuade businesses from offering support if they feel there is no recognition for that support, especially if they have to make additional effort to remove branding from supplied equipment or materials.

***For organisations that either hold or will obtain a liquor licence concurrently with funding from the Community Sponsorship Fund, what undertakings or requirements should the Department seek to ensure alcohol is served in a responsible manner?***

All States and Territories in Australia require liquor licensees to undertake the Responsible Service of Alcohol. The Community Sponsorship Fund should simply demand that all appropriate standards are met. There is no reason to suggest additional conditions should apply simply because funding has been received.

### **Response to the Objectives of the Community Sponsorship Fund**

#### ***Reduce the exposure of young people and children to imagery and branding.***

This should not be an objective of the Community Sponsorship Fund. There is no evidence that exposure to alcohol advertising at community sporting or cultural events leads to binge drinking behaviour.

The exposure of young people to alcohol is already restricted in Australia by the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code, which strictly prohibits any advertisements that encourage underage drinking, excessive consumption or offensive behaviour.

The advertising carried out by the Australian wine industry is reinforcing to young people how alcohol can be enjoyed responsibly by adults in social settings.

***Remove links between alcohol and the sporting and cultural activities that young people are often directly involved in. These links tend to normalise a strong association between alcohol consumption and these activities.***

WFA submits that this Objective is well beyond the intent of the Australian Government in establishing the Community Sponsorship Fund.

Australian alcohol producers already accept that it is unacceptable to sponsor or promote their products at underage events. However, there is no evidence to suggest young people are encouraged to drink because an alcohol brand is associated with an event of any type or size. Sporting organisations, in particular, work hard to avoid anything that may fuel alcohol-related problems, while still providing alcohol for responsible consumption.

The Government’s efforts should be focussed on educating young people to make the right choices at any event and in any situation – encouraging responsible consumption and knowing when to stop. Its support last year for a joint initiative between Cricket Australia and Foster’s was a good example of what can be achieved through a partnership with the industry.