



Senator
Steve Fielding
Leader of Family First



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PROFESSOR ADMITS DRINKERS TURNING TO SPIRITS

FAMILY First remains unconvinced the Rudd Government's alcopops tax will change Australia's binge drinking culture, with the author of an independent report on alcohol admitting drinkers are downing straight spirits rather than alcopops to avoid the tax.

Macquarie University Adjunct Professor David Collins, the author of a National Drug Strategy report, said other measures besides a tax were needed to break Australia's binge drinking culture including tackling alcohol advertising.

"The Rudd Government is trying to divert attention from the alcohol toll by making Australia's binge drinking problem a tax problem," Family First Leader Senator Steve Fielding said in Senate question time today.

"The government rakes in around \$1.8 billion in alcohol tax and obviously wants more but that's not tackling the growing problem of binge drinking in our society.

"The fact that drinkers are turning to strong spirits and mixing their own drinks is of real concern as is the government's lack of commitment to introduce non-tax measures to create a culture of responsible drinking.

"The government must change the culture of binge drinking. It's got to introduce tougher restrictions on alcohol advertising on television, address the health ramifications of binge drinking in a public education campaign and put warning labels on alcoholic drinks.

"If the Rudd government is serious about tackling binge drinking, it would stop hiding behind its billion dollar alcopops tax grab and immediately support Family First's plan for alcohol warning labels and a restriction on alcohol TV advertising till 9.00pm," Senator Fielding said.

"Australia has a binge drinking problem with a huge social cost of \$15.3 billion per year. "Recent research found 71% support adding health information labels to alcohol products and 72% of the population support restricting TV advertising of alcohol products until after 9.30pm," Senator Fielding said today.

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