

23 August 2020

The Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) welcomes the opportunity to highlight its priorities ahead of the 2020-21 Budget, a key juncture in Australia's preventative health policy landscape. Our submission is in response to the impact of COVID-19 which will have profound social consequences, including heightened risk factors for alcohol and other drug (AOD) related harms and associated problems such as mental ill-health and domestic violence.

The ADF is a trusted partner of the Australian Government in delivering preventative health programs and information in the alcohol and other drug (AOD) sphere. Since its inception two decades ago, participation in the ADF's Good Sports program has grown to around 10,000 community sporting clubs, creating cultural and behaviour change in a public setting renowned for association with alcohol. Importantly, independent evaluation shows the program works and provides a net fiscal benefit.

The case for investment in AOD preventative health is compelling. The longer AOD use is delayed, the better the long-term outcomes in key socio-economic drivers. Pressure is reduced on AOD and mental health treatment sectors, hospitals, social security and Australia's criminal justice system. Investment in preventative health should be viewed as a major nation building project with benefits spanning generations.

During the pandemic, the ADF has worked with its Good Sports community partners and the Australian government to develop innovative ways of preventing AOD harms. When restrictions are lifted, AOD protective factors instilled by community-based activities will be more important than ever to aid in the recovery of communities. Furthermore, with Australian government support, the ADF has led the conversation on alcohol related harms through our micro and mass media campaigns.

The need for the protective factors instilled by Good Sports has never been more important. The National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan, endorsed by National Cabinet in May 2020, noted "a significant risk for mental health and suicide posed by alcohol and other drug use. There are strong indications that the pandemic may result in increased substance use within the community". Harnessing the opportunities provided by digital technology is integral to growing Good Sports in an effective and sustainable way.

As the Treasurer noted May 2020: "Significant product innovation, market diversification strategies and the accelerated uptake of digital transformation opportunities have also been pursued by many businesses in

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their effort to adapt to the difficult circumstances they are in. This innovation will assist these businesses on the other side.”

The ADF’s 2020-21 Budget submission contains the following funding proposals:

1. Extension and expansion of the Good Sports program commencing to build protective factors and reduce AOD related harm. This will provide communities certainty, retain program delivery expertise, as well as enable the ADF to better prepare for anticipated AOD challenges as restrictions are removed. We respect the privilege of receiving public funds and have endeavoured to find efficiencies in operating costs. Funding provided by the Australian government will enable a transition to Good Sports Digital and allow us to:

- Recruit an additional 450 clubs every year and reduce costs by an average of 20 per cent per year over three years. (N.B. Good Sports’ most recent quadrennial funding package concluded June 30 2020 and the Australian government provided interim 12 months funding following postponement of the 2020-21 Budget. See July 2020 Economic & Fiscal Update, p.140.)
- Provide additional mental health supports to Good Sports clubs. This will improve the confidence and capacity of club leaders to respond appropriately when mental health issues arise in their membership.
- Train leaders in community sport – a “Great Leaders” initiative – to increase role modelling of positive behaviours that will reduce alcohol and drug use, promote positive mental health and retain young people in community sport.
- Drive alcohol and drug behaviour change beyond the club setting by encouraging families and friends to improve understanding of steps to reduce alcohol related harm and raise awareness about the positive role sport plays in building protective factors and minimising the harms of AOD.

2. Continuing the ADF’s micro and mass media campaigns, which includes data collection and evaluation. These would build on the “Celebrate You” micro-campaign focusing on millennial women, as well as the “Little Habit” mass media campaign directed at 21-50 year old Australians who may have increased their drinking during isolation. With respect to the impending finalisation of the Australian government’s *Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol*, we believe there is great potential for synergies and amplified impact.

Enclosed is the ADF’s submission.

Yours sincerely

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