



MEDIA RELEASE

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## **New water law to cut alcohol-related harm gets the tick**

VICTORIA: New laws announced today by the Victorian Government that will make all venues provide free drinking water for patrons has achieved the tick of approval from all members of the Alcohol Policy Coalition - Australian Drug Foundation, Cancer Council Victoria, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and VicHealth.

The Coalition is supporting the Government's new legislation and says access to water is a health and safety issue.

"Research shows that free water is one of the most used strategies by people trained in the responsible service of alcohol to reduce drunken behaviour. We also know that drunk people are more likely to commit violence or injure themselves, so enforcing the free availability of water makes a lot of sense," said John Rogerson CEO Australian Drug Foundation.

"Free water allows people to space their drinking, thereby slowing intoxication, so premises that don't offer free, drinkable water aren't acting responsibly to protect patrons, bar staff and the community," added Mr Rogerson.

The number of alcohol-related hospitalisations has risen by one third in a decade (1996-2005) across Victoria, and that rate looks set to continue rising.

While some venues are already doing the right thing, there is currently no law to require free, drinkable water be made available.

"Good venues should have water stations for patrons. That means providing water that is easily accessible, unlimited and free," said Mr Rogerson.

In 2004, the Government introduced voluntary water guidelines to encourage licensees to provide free or low cost drinking water.

"Hot water in toilets is not sufficient. Licensed premises have a responsibility to protect patrons from intoxication and free water helps do that," said Mr Rogerson.

Every week, the nation's love affair with boozing is killing more than 60 Australians and putting another 1,500 people in hospital and this is something we have the power to prevent.

Mr Rogerson said "There's no easier win for venues than providing free, drinkable water.

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**For media enquiries please contact Renee Lustman on 03 9278 8109 or 0430 948 380.**

The Alcohol Policy Coalition (the Coalition) is a collaboration of health agencies – Australian Drug Foundation, Cancer Council Victoria, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and VicHealth – with shared concern relating to the misuse of alcohol and its health/social impacts on the community.

Alcohol remains one of the major causes of preventable death and illness in Australia. As such, the Coalition advocates for evidence based policy to prevent and reduce the harms caused by alcohol to Australians. For more information visit [www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au](http://www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au)