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Media Release

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Alcohol causes cancer and the public needs to know

This release is in response to Jessica Adamson's article in yesterday's Advertiser (16/07/2025) complaining about a public health campaign which addresses the cancer related harms of alcohol.

Michael White said, 'It is worth noting that whilst the alcohol industry in South Australia generates significant income for the state (best estimates are around $4B) it is well below the estimated costs of harms caused by alcohol. These harms cost South Australians somewhere in the region of $5.25B per year (based on 7% of the national alcohol harms figure from the George Institute for Global Health of $74.9B for 2022/23).'[1]

It is unfortunate that the state does not collect and publish alcohol wholesale sales data or quantify the value of the industry or harms in any publicly available reports so we could more accurately discuss these issues.

Alcohol harms include both tangible and intangible costs such as healthcare, lost productivity, crime, premature death including cancers, accidents, self-harm and family and domestic violence associated with alcohol use. Alcohol use and intoxication is associated with a significant proportion of ambulance call outs (but again this data is not collected in SA so we must extrapolate from other states such as Victoria- see AIHW reports where approximately 10% of ambulance callouts are substance related and 71% of substance related callouts are alcohol related).[2]

Michael White, Executive Officer said 'Currently every alcoholic drink sold in SA is subsidised by the health and justice budgets. The government needs the 'Spread' advertising campaign to reduce alcohol harms and the significant demands they place on the health and justice systems."

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[1] https://www.georgeinstitute.org/our-impact/policy-statements-and-recommendations/updated-social-and-economic-costs-of-alcohol-tobacco-and-drug-use-in-australia

[2] https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/data-by-region/ambulance-attendances

The South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services (SANDAS) works to enhance community wellbeing and reduce the harm associated with alcohol and drug use. We represent non-government organisations working in the alcohol and other drugs sector and provide independent advocacy and representation, workforce development, networking and policy support for our members.