

## **‘Thinking Drinking: Achieving Cultural Change by 2020’ Conference: Australia’s Next National Alcohol Strategy - Consultation Workshop**

Facilitated by Professor Margaret Hamilton  
with Trevor King & Moya Smith

The National Alcohol Strategy – A Plan for Action 2001 – 2003/04 expired on 30 June 2004. At the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS) in November 2004, Ministers agreed to develop a new National Alcohol Strategy for 2005 – 2009. A draft strategy will be developed for MCDS consideration in November 2005. A project management group chaired by Professor Margaret Hamilton and supported by Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre is responsible for developing the strategy. Four advisory groups (Research; Health & Social Issues; Alcohol Beverage & Hospitality; and Regulation, Enforcement & Public Amenity) have been established to provide expert guidance. The aim of the strategy development process is to:

- Build on past efforts
- Consult widely
- Seek evidence
- Scan the horizon
- Focus on some key areas
- Identify achievable goals
- Build support for action

The Thinking Drinking Conference provided one opportunity to engage people with interest and expertise in alcohol policy development to contribute to the consultation process. Fifty national and international participants working in areas such as law enforcement, liquor licensing, health, and the alcohol beverage industry attended the workshop. The question was posed – *‘What is the main issue that the National Strategy should address and how should it be addressed?’* This generated broad discussion and specific suggestions. Participants were also asked to complete a feedback sheet identifying key issues and responses. Some of the issues identified in the written feedback included:

- Alcohol taxation and pricing anomalies;
- Inappropriate alcohol marketing, supply and promotion;
- Need to change cultural/community attitudes from acceptance of episodic ‘binge’ drinking to moderate, responsible drinking;
- Enforcement of existing laws/regulations - particularly in and around licensed premises;
- Youth drinking and associated harm;
- The need to ensure that all strategies are ‘evidence-based’ (recognising that the evidence may not always be strong – so need to go with the ‘promising’ approaches and evaluate);
- Need for greater role for local government/communities;
- Continued effort to address alcohol issues experienced by Indigenous people (remote, rural & urban);
- Need to address public violence and associated fear; and
- Need for better data collection on alcohol consumption and associated harms.