

ADF POSITION STATEMENT ON YOUNG PEOPLE & ALCOHOL

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this document is to articulate the ADF's position on alcohol and young people. For this policy a young person is understood to be less than 18 years old.

POSITION:

- i. Young people should avoid drinking alcohol until age eighteen years, at least.
- ii. Parents should discourage their children from drinking alcohol until age eighteen years, at least.
- iii. All state and territories should implement 'secondary supply' legislation to provide parents with legal control over their children's access to alcohol; to restrict young people's access to alcohol; to ensure that any supply to a young person and any consumption by a young person takes place under strict conditions to minimise risk of harm.
- iv. Alcohol advertising, alcohol products, alcohol merchandise and alcohol sponsorships must not be directed towards young people or placed on products or at events which young people use, or attend, or otherwise find attractive or appealing.

BACKGROUND: Substantial research evidence suggests alcohol use by young people should be avoided for a number of reasons

- Initiation of drinking at a young age may increase the likelihood of negative physical and mental health conditions, social problems and alcohol dependence (NIAAA, 1993);
- The brain is more sensitive to damage from alcohol in childhood and adolescence as it is still developing, potentially leading to learning difficulties, memory problems and reduced performance on attention-based activity (Toumbourou, 2014);
- Regular drinking in adolescence increases the risk of developing dependent or risky patterns of use in young adulthood and later life (Grant, 1997);
- Drinking contributes to the three leading causes of death among adolescents—unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide—along with risk taking behaviour, unsafe sex choices, non-consensual sexual behaviour, and alcoholic overdose (Spath, 2012);
- Risk of accidents, injuries, violence and self-harm are higher among drinkers aged less than 18 years (Bonomo, Adverse outcomes of alcohol use in adolescents, 2001);
- Drinkers under 15 years of age more likely to engage in risky or anti-social behavior (Bonomo, Adolescent alcohol problems: whose responsibility is it anyway?, 2005).

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