

23 December 2015

Ms Bernice Watson  
Research Director  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
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Dear Ms Watson

### **Support for QCAA on Tackling Alcohol-fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015**

The Heart Foundation writes in support of the submission to this inquiry by the Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol (QCAA). I welcome the Queensland Government's actions to address this important issue. This proposed legislation is a useful step in tackling the many health issues that we face from alcohol.

The Heart Foundation supports a comprehensive approach to alcohol use in our society. The approach to tobacco control provides an extremely effective example of a comprehensive approach. Over many years, a comprehensive tobacco control plan has led to a significant and sustained reduction in consumption resulting in many thousands of lives and health costs saved. A similar approach to alcohol consumption will also result in a reduction in the harm to health and society.

A comprehensive approach to alcohol would include legislative reforms to restrict access to alcohol through restricting trading hours, license restrictions, enforcement and monitoring, as well as restrictions on advertising, promotion and discounting, and collection of data on alcohol sales, consumption and harm. We also need demand reduction strategies including education and social marketing campaigns.

Binge drinking or excessive drinking can lead to death from a number of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease. Young adults are particularly vulnerable as they demonstrate high rates of alcohol consumption, which is one of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Heavy drinking (both episodic and long-term) markedly increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. The risk of hypertension (high blood pressure) increases with heavier drinking, and reducing heavy alcohol consumption will reduce blood pressure. Any short-term benefit of alcohol, such as reducing the risk of clot formation in the arteries supplying blood to the heart muscle, is of no benefit to the vast majority of young adults.

Women are also particularly susceptible to alcohol and experience a higher rate of alcohol-related deaths due to heart disease than men. This is likely due to the disproportionate effect that alcohol has on women – they simply don't have to drink as much for their drinking to become a health risk.

We also know that mental well-being is extremely important for cardiovascular health, and excessive drinking is both a cause and symptom of mental health issues.

Just as with smoking, alcohol use is established while people are young adults. As a society, we need to provide an environment that is supportive of making healthier choices around alcohol consumption and reduce binge-drinking behaviours. This proposed legislation is a good start to providing a more supportive environment in which individuals make a choice. I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen Vines".

**Stephen Vines**  
Chief Executive Officer