



Media Release

24 November 2016

For children's sake, peak bodies back tax on sugary drinks

Members of the National Oral Health Alliance welcomed the findings from the Grattan Institute's report "*A sugary drinks tax – Recovering the community cost of obesity*" as it supports the position of a number of Alliance members who have previously called for a tax on sugary drinks, which Australians consume at among the highest rates in the world.

Members of the Alliance acknowledge that sugary drinks' contribute to obesity, but they also have a significant impact on people's teeth and dental disease, especially those of children.

"Poor oral health, of which sugar is a major cause, costs the community many hundreds of millions of dollars a year in dental fees and as taxpayers extra health costs. It obviously inflicts avoidable pain and discomfort on adults and children. But for children, in many cases for children as young as three years old, treating dental caries can require unnecessary general anaesthetics, along with the loss of teeth at a very early age" stated Tony McBride, Spokesperson for the Alliance.

And for adults, poor teeth can impact on self-confidence. Ever tried to get job with poor teeth?

Using evidence from abroad (where similar measures have been undertaken), the Grattan Institute suggests that a new excise tax of 40 cents per 100 grams of sugar (on all non-alcoholic, water-based drinks that contain added sugar) would increase the price of a two-litre bottle of soft drink by about 80 cents, raise about \$500 million a year, and generate a fall of about 15 per cent in the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, as consumers switched to water and other drinks not subject to the new tax.

NOHA also proposes that the additional tax income could also be used to fund more preventive activity, doubling the impact by reducing future dental caries, especially for children and people on lower incomes. Children's oral health status at 18 is a good indicator of their future oral health.

NOHA members supporting the call include the Australian Dental Association, Australian Dental & Oral Health Therapists Association, Australian Health Care Reform Alliance, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, Consumers Health Forum, Dental Hygienists' Association of Australia, the National Rural Health Alliance and the Public Health Association of Australia.

Given that dental and gum diseases are among the most easily preventable conditions, the Government could also be considering a broader range of preventive strategies, as spelled out in the National Oral Health Plan, including addressing poverty, restricting advertising of high sugar products, and ensuring all tap water is fluoridated.

Contact: Tony McBride, Spokesperson for NOHA, 0407 531 468 www.oralhealth.asn.au

Further media releases by members can be found at:

- http://www.ada.org.au/Dental-Professionals/Policies/National-Oral-Health/2-2-2-Diet-and-Nutrition/ADAPolicies_2-2-2_DietandNutrition_V1
- http://ahha.asn.au/sites/default/files/docs/policy-issue/ahha_position_statement_-_sugar_sweetened_beverage.pdf
- <https://chf.org.au/media-releases/tax-sugary-drinks-hits-sweet-spot-our-health>