Australasian Therapeutic Communities Conference

THE GREAT ALCOHOL DEBATE

WHY DO WE NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Misuse of alcohol is a major preventable risk factor for a wide range of diseases and injuries including:

- Certain cancers
- Cardiovascular disease
- Liver cirrhosis
- Alcohol dependence
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Educational problems in young people
- Drowning
- Suicide
- Violence

$15.3b Social Costs 2004 -05

In the Western Pacific Region, alcohol-related harm accounts for 5.5% of the burden of disease, this is higher than the global average of 4%.

Epidemiological evidence suggests that by the age of 20, alcohol accounts for 28% of total harm in males

2007 Household Survey

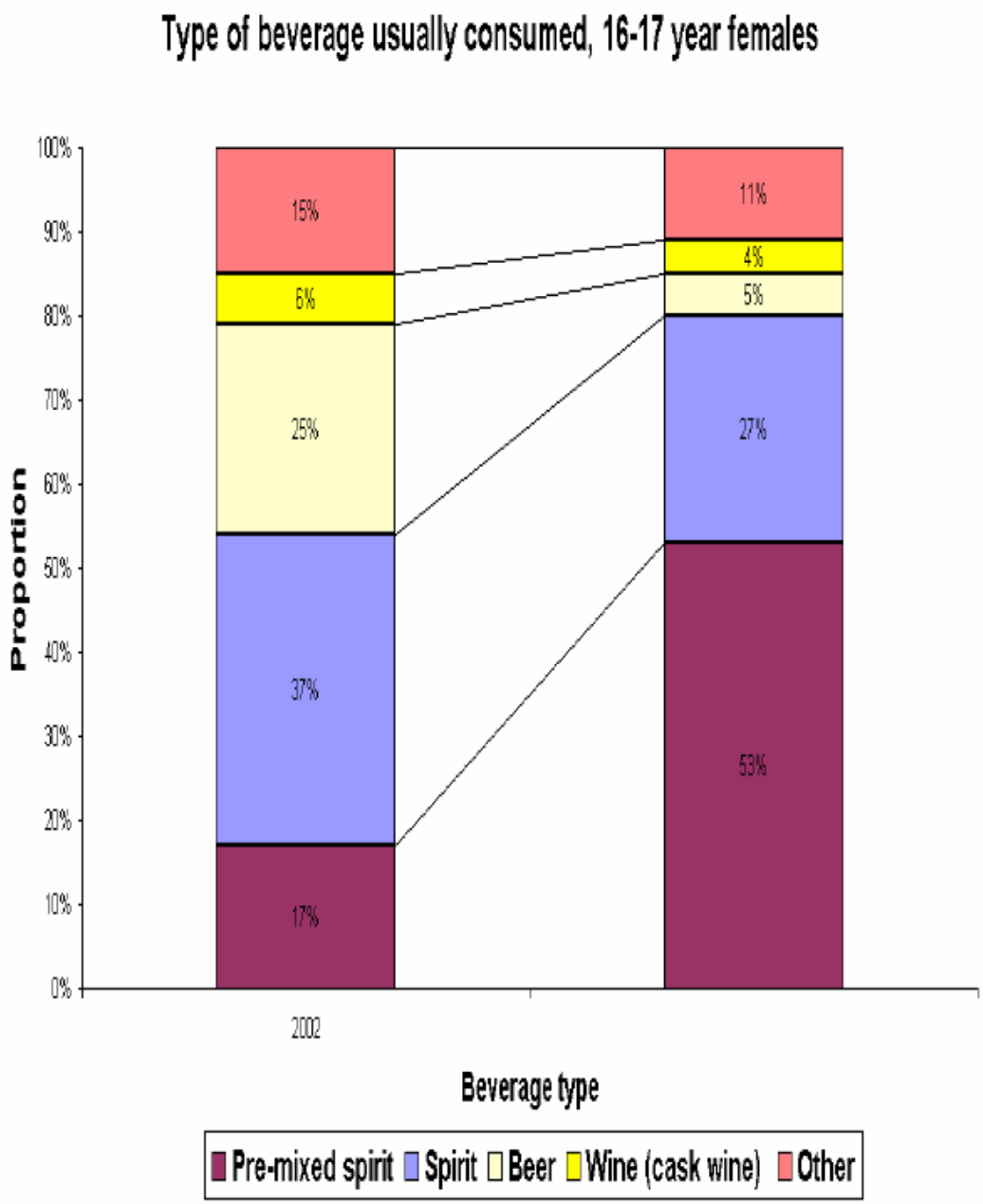
- 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey conducted between July and November 2007 (n=<23,000)
- Almost 30% of 12-15 year olds drank alcohol in 2007.
- 1 in every 4 of those aged 14 – 19 had a binge drinking session at least once a month for the last 12 months.
- April 07 AIHW media release stated that 'The proportion was higher among females (28.3%) than males (24.5%).

Deaths – alcohol & young people

- The *Trends in Child Deaths in NSW 1996 – 2005* study from the NSW Child Death Review Team reported on 145 deaths over 10 years.
- Found that in the decade, the risk for 14 to 15 year olds rose dramatically (up 152%).
- The risk for girls up by 37% but down by 17% for boys.
- "The increase in alcohol-related deaths for females and the decline for males….may result from several factors, including the introduction of alcopops, first sold in Australia in 1995, which particularly target females".

RTDs – increased market Share – 16 – 17 yrs Females

(2002 – 2005)



An obvious cause of harm....however.....

.....Alcohol is a legal product

.....that many people enjoy

.....which also plays a significant role in the Australian economy, generating:

- Substantial employment
- Retail activity
- Export income
- Tax revenue.

HENCE, we have the Great Debate about Alcohol.

Great Debate Issue 1: Taxation

What is the proposed change to tax on alcopops?

- Alcopop tax rate was $39.36/L
- Straight spirit tax rate is $66.67/L
- Proposed change adjusts alcopop (premixed, RTD) tax rate to equivalent of that for spirits (senate yet to pass legislation).
- Represents a 70% increase in alcopop tax = overall cost increase *if* passed onto consumers by industry.

Alco-pops / RTDs and Market Share

- Trend towards greater consumption of RTDs:
  - In 2000, 18% of males and 22% of females drank pre-mixed spirits (RTDs) on last occasion of risky drinking (King et al, 2005)
  - In 2005, 51% of males and 78% of females drank pre-mixed spirits (RTDs) on last occasion of risky drinking (King et al, 2005)

Revenue from Alcohol

- Both government and industry receive revenue from adolescent drinking.

Industry

- In 2002 total non-tax revenue estimated at $104.7 million
- In 2005 total non-tax revenue estimated at $110.9 million
- **6% increase ↑**

Government

- In 2002 total tax revenue estimated at $112.1 million
- In 2005 total tax revenue estimated at $107.3 million
- **4% decrease ↓**

Taxation – confusing and contentious

What should the tax rate be, and for which drinks?

Senate Inquiry into the RTD tax – recommended a review of taxation

Volumetric system – Has some issues.

Align public health goals with alcohol tax system?

Great Debate Topic 2 –

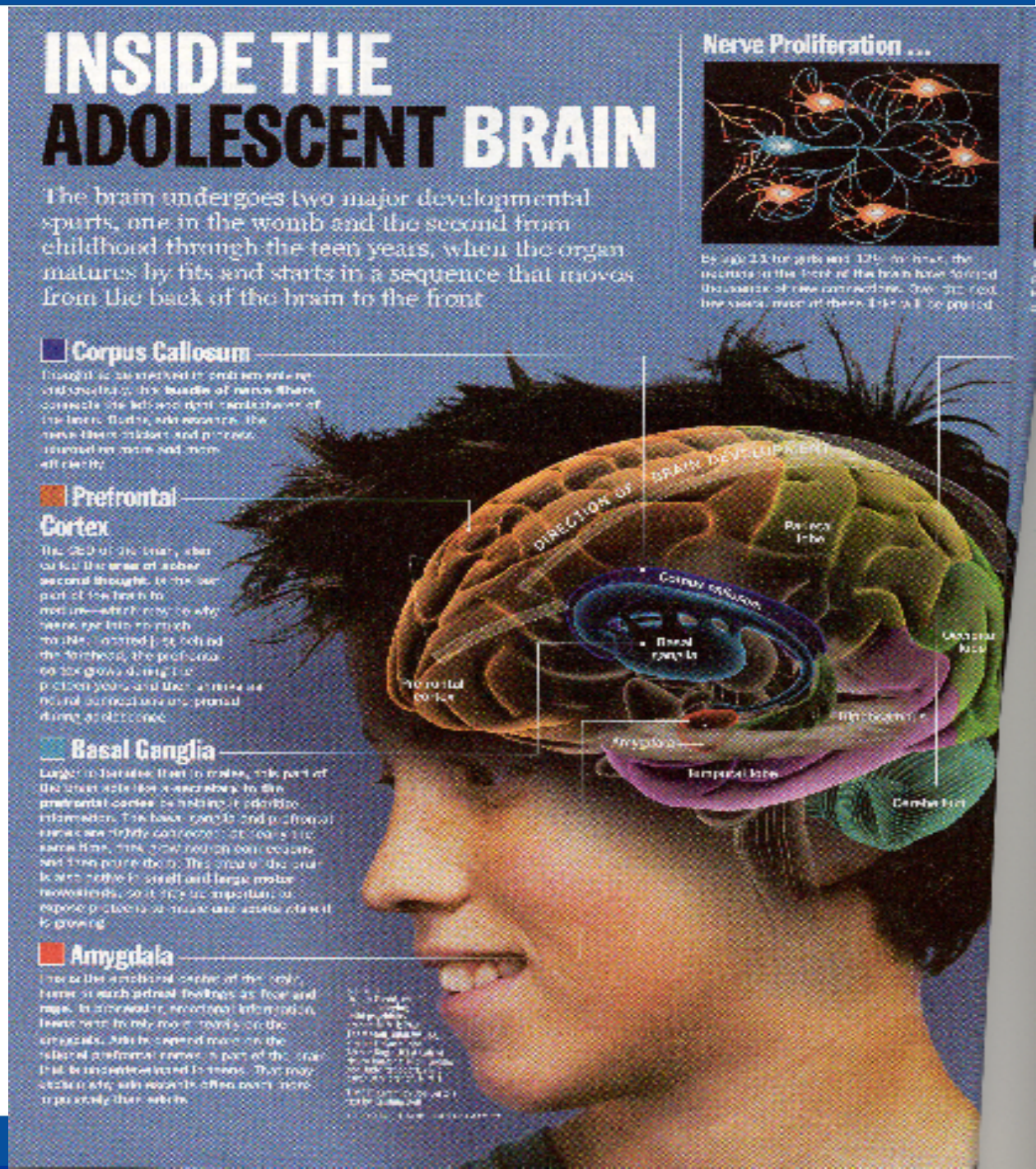
Binge Drinking Young People

Household Survey:

- One in five Australians aged 16-17 years drink alcohol at least weekly
  - 19-23% of adolescents binge drink in last week
    - Slight increase in young females
  - Binge is greater than 5 drinks on an occasion
- One in five do not drink alcohol

Brain Development

- Adolescence is a period of profound brain maturation not complete until about age 20.
- Does alcohol interfere with normal development?



Brain Development

- **The back of brain matures first…**
  - sensory and physical activities favoured over complex, cognitive-demanding activities
  - propensity toward risky, impulsive behaviors
  - poor planning and judgment
- **The Prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until 20 years of age (judgement)**
- **The Amygdala dominates (reward rules)**

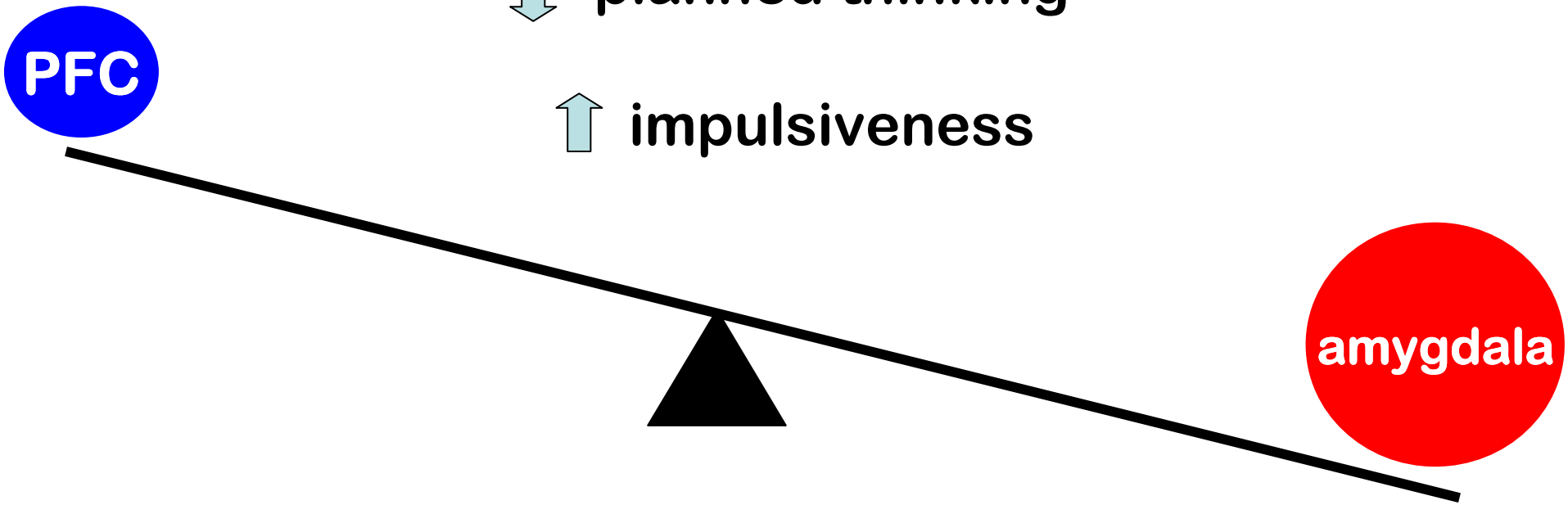
⇧ risk taking

⇧ low effort - high excitement activities

⇧ interest in novel stimuli

⇩ planned thinking

⇧ impulsiveness



Young People

- Spirits are preferred by young drinkers
- Debate over drinking culture and modeling of behaviour by adults as causally important factors for adolescent drinking
- Supply of alcohol to young people and RSA important issues
- Marketing and product development (palatable to young people) is an important recent change
- …….advertising

Great Debate Topic 3 –

Advertising

Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code

- ABAC – self-regulating advertising code of the Australian alcohol beverages industry (1998) administered by a management committee which includes industry, advertising and government representatives.
- Advertising complaints are handled by the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Adjudication Panel. Costs borne by Industry.
- The Chief Adjudicator is Professor the Hon Michael Lavarch
- In 2006, the panel made 9 determinations; 7 complaints were dismissed and 2 upheld.

ABAC Code – key contents

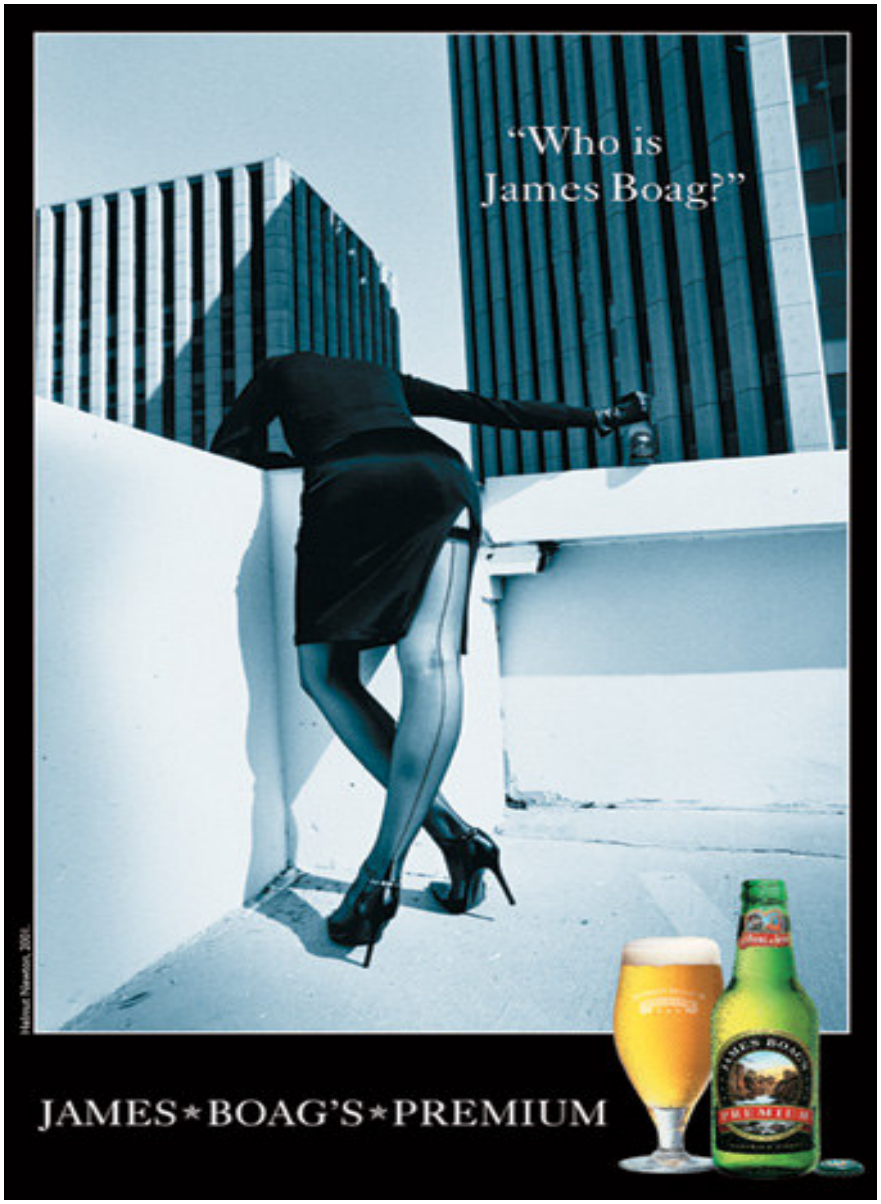
- not have a strong or evident appeal to children or adolescents
- not challenge or dare people to drink or sample a particular alcohol beverage, other than low alcohol beverages, and must not contain any inducement to prefer an alcohol beverage because of its higher alcohol content

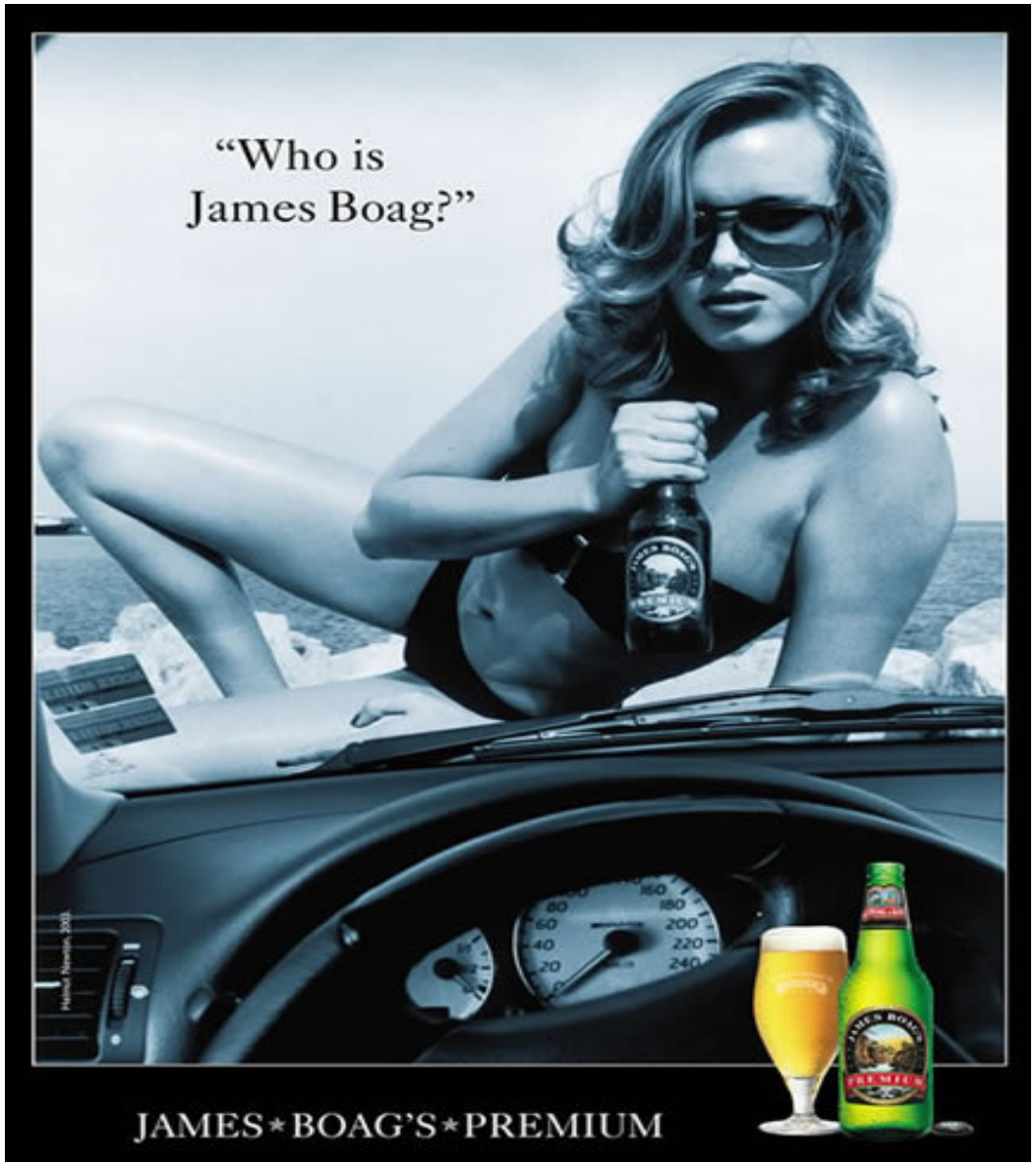
ABAC key contents cont'd

- not encourage consumption that is in excess of, or inconsistent with the NHMRC Australian Alcohol Guidelines

- not suggest that the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages may create or contribute to a significant change in mood or environment

  - *must not depict the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages as a cause of or contributing to the achievement of personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success*


"Who is
James Boag?"
JAMES★BOAG'S★PREMIUM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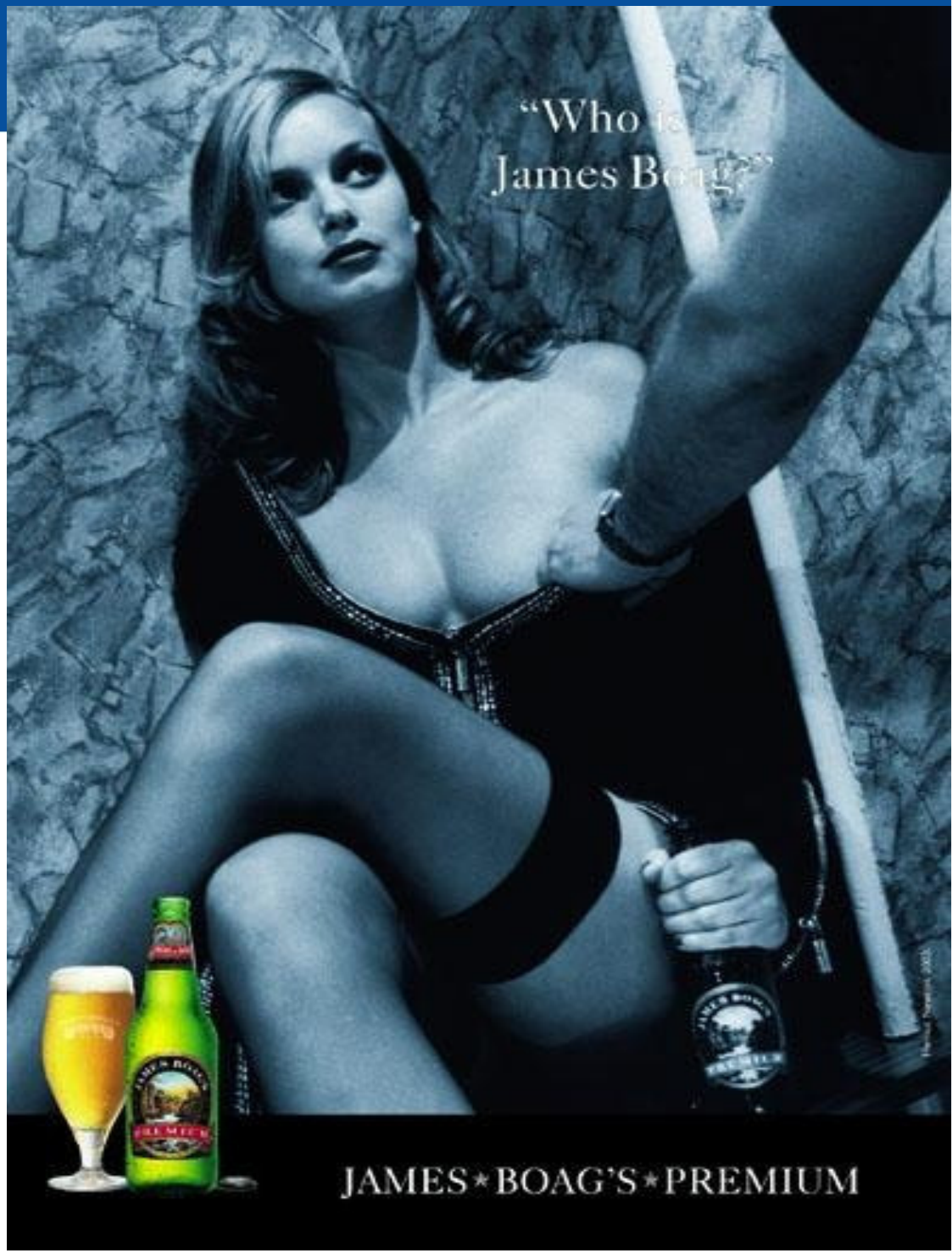
Withdrawn following complaints by the Community Alcohol Action Network & the Centre Against Sexual Assault 2004



Men's Health Nov 2001

Great Debate Topic # 4

Availability

Is there a problem with availability?

- Supermarkets
- Bottle shops
- Licensed premises – restricted plus extended hours
- Discussion about the optimum number of licensed premises within geographic concentrations

- Attempts to restrict the number of liquor licences have been criticised as anti-competitive and against National Competition Policy

- Problems?

Bureau of Crime Statistics Research – NSW

- The more licensed premises there are in an area, the more likely are problems of drunkenness and property damage
- Almost 25% of the respondents who lived within half a kilometre of the five closest licensed premises reported problems with drunkenness in their neighbourhood (compared with less than 10% living further than 1.6 kms away).
- Almost 36% of respondents who lived within half a kilometre of the five closest liquor outlets reported problems with property damage compared with 23% of those living further than 1.6 kms away.

Estimating the Short-term cost of police time spent dealing with alcohol related crime in NSW (*2007)*

- Neil Donnelly et al, NDLERF Report found:
  - 1. Alcohol related crime costs $50m in NSW police salary. The cost of alcohol-related crime could employ 1,000 extra constables
  - 2. Over 17% of NSW police time on a Friday or Saturday night is spent on alcohol-related crime, reducing alcohol-related crime would enable this time to be spent elsewhere

RSA – Responsible Service of Alcohol

- Almost 2,500 young people surveyed.
- Respondents who reported at least one sign of intoxication were asked how the licensed premises staff reacted to this.
- In 54% of cases the staff continued to serve them drinks (no change from 2002)
- On 2% of occasions they were asked to leave the premises, down from 4% in 2002.

YOUNG ADULTS' EXPERIENCE OF RESPONSIBLE SERVICE PRACTICE IN NSW: AN UPDATE

Scott, Donnelly, Poynton & Weatherburn, (2007).

Reducing the level of alcohol misuse is a shared responsibility

Federal government

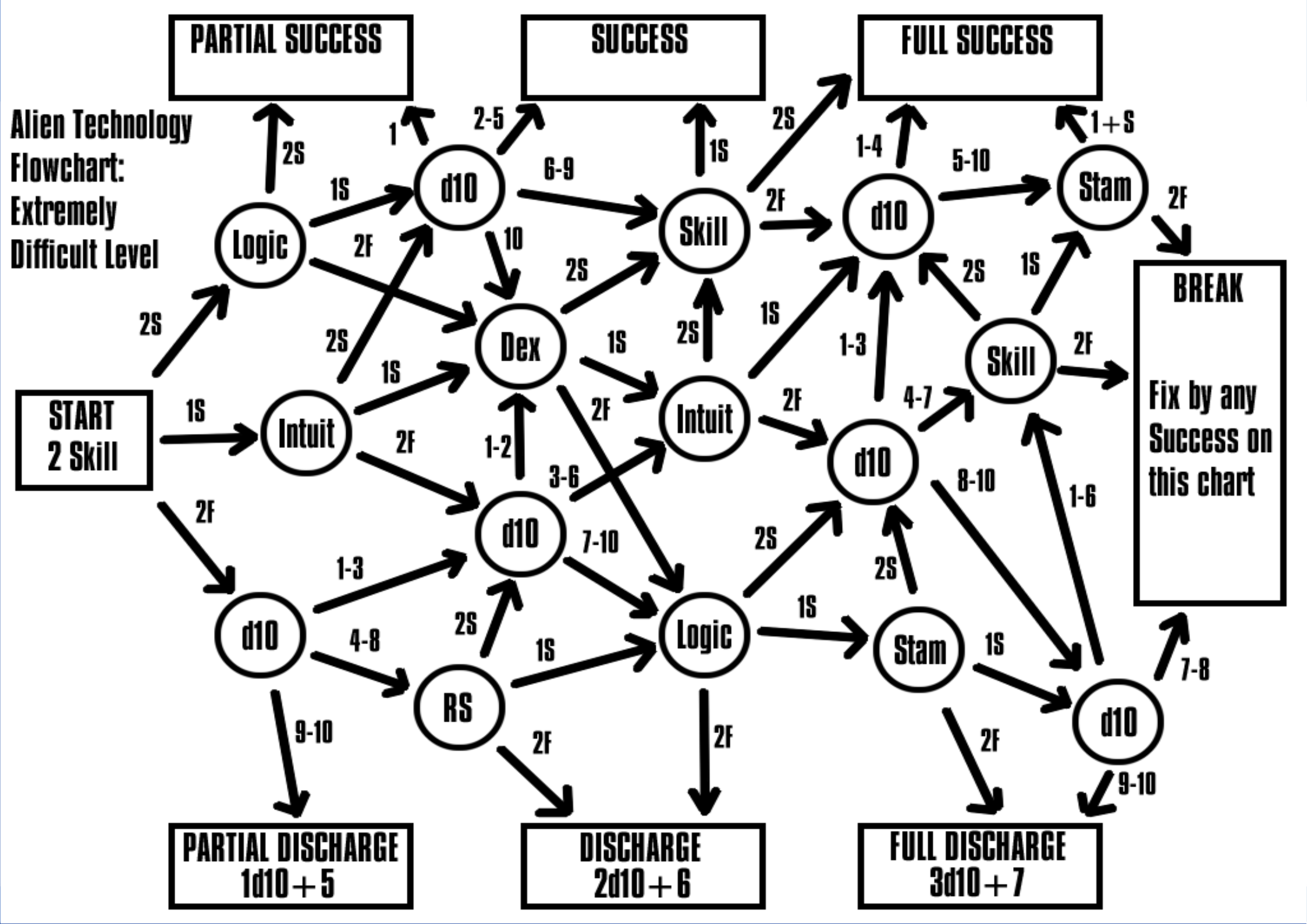
- Leadership,
- Policy direction,
- Research and
- National campaigns.

State and Territory government

- Liquor licensing,
- Regulation
- Policing and
- Provision of services

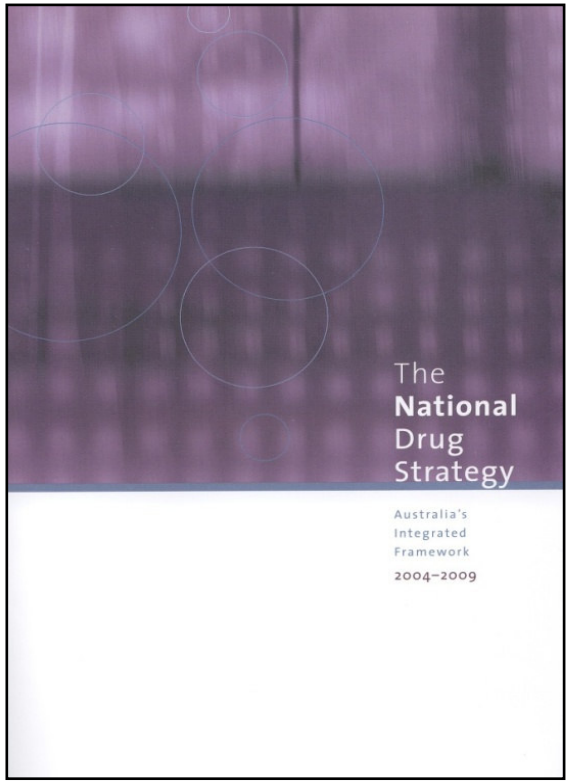
Great Debate Topic # 5

What should we do about it?


Alien Technology Flowchart: Extremely Difficult Level
PARTIAL SUCCESS
SUCCESS
FULL SUCCESS
START 2 Skill
Logic
Intuit
d10
Dex
d10
Skill
Intuit
Logic
RS
d10
Stam
d10
Skill
d10
Stam
d10
BREAK
Fix by any Success on this chart
PARTIAL DISCHARGE 1d10+5
DISCHARGE 2d10+6
FULL DISCHARGE 3d10+7
2S
1S
2F
1
2-5
6-9
10
1-2
3-6
7-10
1-3
4-8
9-10
1-4
5-10
1+S
1-3
4-7
8-10
1-6
7-8

Evidence?

- Australia has 3 National Research Centres
- NDARC's work contributes to all 8 of the NDS Priority Areas, with three dominant areas:
  - Improved access to quality treatment;
  - Reducing drug use and related harms; and
  - Identification of, and response to, emerging trends



Brief Snapshot NDARC *Alcohol* Research

- **AARC**
- **CLIMATE**
- **Secondary Supply of Alcohol to Minors**

Other work of interest:

- Tastes & Perceptions Study – Copeland, et al
- Treatment and Treatment Outcome Studies – Mattick, Teesson, Copeland, etc.
- Cost-Effectiveness Study – Doran et al
- Alcohol and the adolescent brain – Teesson et al

Alcohol Action in Rural Communities – AARC

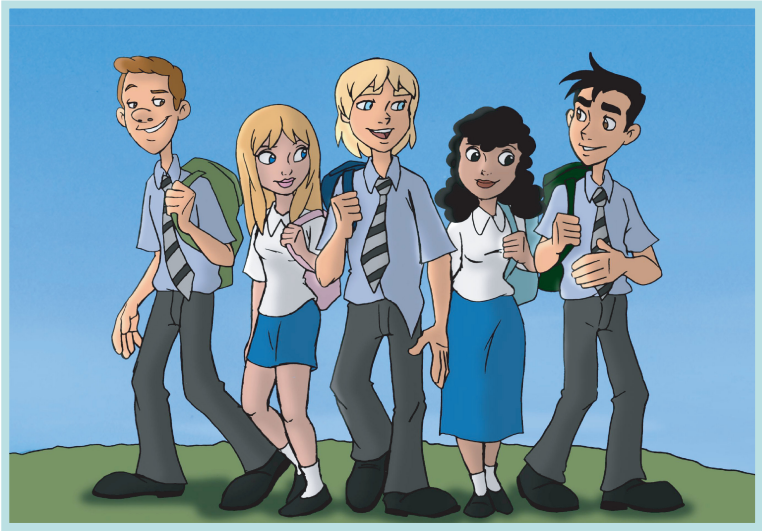
- Randomised controlled trial of matched rural communities
- Interventions designed with involvement of the community and using the evidence base to reduce alcohol related harm
- Measures of alcohol related harm will include criminal incidents, traffic accidents, hospital admissions, accident & emergency presentations
- Cost-benefit analysis will also be conducted to determine the outcomes of the community action approach.

Key contact:
Dr Anthony Shakeshaft

a.shakeshaft@unsw.edu.au

CLIMATE Schools

- Alcohol Module complete, psychostimulants & cannabis (in prep.)
- RCT with a 2 yr follow up
- Interactive, computer-driven lessons given as part of the Health/Phys Ed curriculum, Yr 8 students
- Cartoon 'soapie' where prevention strategies are given real-life contexts
- Alcohol module evaluated – excellent results



Key Contact –

Dr Laura Vogl

l.vogl@unsw.edu.au

Climate Schools: Alcohol module

RCT with a 2 year follow up. Results showed that compared to controls, those who received CLIMATE Schools program had:

- ✓ Increases in alcohol knowledge
- ✓ Decreases in alcohol use
- ✓ Less alcohol related harms

Vogl, L.,Teesson, M., et al. (submitted). The development and evaluation of a school based prevention program for alcohol misuse.

Secondary Supply of Alcohol to Minors

(Catherine Deans, Laura Vogl, Maree Teesson, et al)

- Estimates are that between 37% and 52% of minors obtained alcohol from their parents the last time they drank
- Conflicting information about laws pertaining to supply of alcohol to minors & (thus) a lack of educational material
- Evidence unclear about causal relationship btwn parental supply & adolescent drinking problems (frequency of drinking v harm/risky drinking one confounding issue)
- Advice to parents??

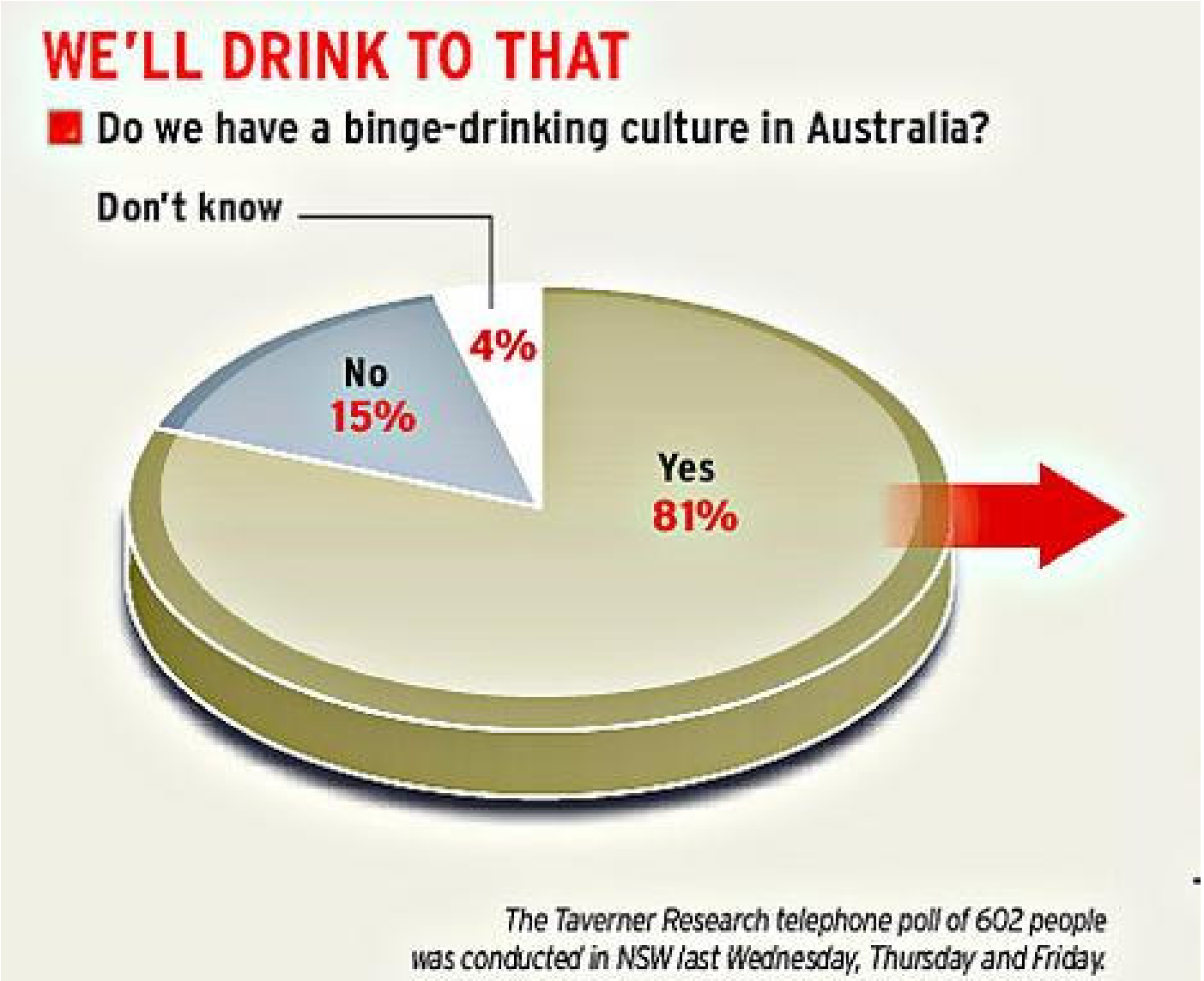
OK – besides building the evidence base for further interventions

…what other responses?

Key Questions:

1. What Prevention & Intervention Strategies Work?
2. Alcohol **pricing and taxation** (to reflect alcohol volume)
3. **Regulating the availability** of alcohol
    1. Examples: Raising the minimum purchasing age and/or enforcing current restrictions
4. Tougher **regulation of alcohol promotion**
5. Continued emphasis on **drink-driving** countermeasures
6. Modifying the **drinking environment**
7. Providing **accessible treatment & early intervention** services

Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity, Babor et al, 2003



It is not that we drink….

it is **how** we drink (patterns of drinking) and **how much** we drink (quantity)

Change Culture:

- Guidelines on appropriate drinking for adolescents
- Mass media campaigns promoting responsible drinking
- School based programs within a comprehensive plan
- Whole of community approaches, using evidence-based interventions, including sport

Target ‘intoxication’ – unacceptable and uncool

Smoking & drink driving – good examples that show culture change is possible.

Other options:

- Design taxation system for alcohol that is aligned with public health goals
- Incentives to encourage manufacturers to market mid-strength and low-strength products
- Restrictions on the availability of drinks with a high alcohol content (e.g. stop serving shots or double strength spirits after 10pm)

Coordinated Government Responses:

- National, State and Local government – discussing and trialling responses, for example:
  - ⇑ Tax on RTD's
  - Sporting and other community involvement
  - Lock-outs after 2.00 am
  - Non police liquor inspectors
  - Secondary supply legislation
  - Increase fees for late night opening venues
  - Plans for public education campaigns

Thank You

Acknowledgements to NDARC staff who have assisted with some of the slides in this presentation.