

## Media Release

### Last drinks: RACP wants alcohol out of State of Origin

**30 May 2016**

With millions around Australia set to watch the NSW “VB” Blues take on the Queensland “XXXX” Maroons on Wednesday night, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is reminding regulators and the community of the impact of alcohol marketing on children.

Last year, game two of the State of Origin series was the most watched television program in Australia, while games one and three were among the top five<sup>i</sup>. With strong evidence to suggest that children can correctly recall and match sporting teams with their sponsors<sup>ii</sup>, the RACP is concerned about the impact of alcohol promotion on young viewers.

In addition to alcohol sponsorship, regulatory loopholes also allow for the advertising of alcohol products during the telecast. Sport telecasts are the only programs allowed to actively promote alcohol products before 8:30pm.

Primarily due to this loophole, it is estimated that children aged under 18 years are exposed to a more than 50 million alcohol advertisements during live sport each year<sup>iii</sup>.

RACP President Dr Catherine Yelland said it is concerning that young, impressionable children and adolescents are exposed to alcohol marketing while they watch their favourite players and teams compete.

“In terms of broadcast numbers, State of Origin is Australia’s biggest television event of the year, so it is disappointing that the three games will again be dominated by alcohol sponsorship and advertising,” explained Dr Yelland.

“I find it very difficult to reconcile that an event which captivates interest among young children, and dominates schoolyard discussion, is flooded by the branding of a product that is detrimental to their health.

“Studies have shown that alcohol marketing strategies lead to children and adolescents starting to drink, regular young drinkers becoming prone to binge drinking patterns, and established young drinkers consuming alcohol at levels which increase their risk of alcohol-related harms.

“These stages of progression are a steady downward spiral. It is therefore of little surprise that the peak age for the onset of alcohol use disorders is only 18 years<sup>iv</sup>.”

Dr Yelland said the RACP made a series of recommendations as part of its [Alcohol Policy](#) launched earlier this year, which included the need for national, comprehensive, evidence-based strategies to combat the harms of alcohol.

Among the recommendations were that sporting organisations phase out alcohol marketing and that the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) remove the loophole

that allows for television advertising of alcohol at times when children are likely to be watching.

**Ends**

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**About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP):** The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.

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<sup>i</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/entertainment/sydney-confidential/the-2015-winners-and-losers-in-australias-tv-ratings-war/news-story/d91b7e701bab21d898e23598ee43d633#load-story-comments>

<sup>ii</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/information-and-resources/research/giro-research-updates/december-2015/children-are-watching-sponsorship-in-australian-sport>

<sup>iii</sup> Carr S, O'Brien K, Ferris J, et al. Child and adolescent exposure to alcohol advertising in Australia's major televised sports. Drug and Alcohol Review 2015: DOI: 10.1111/dar.12326.

<sup>iv</sup> Degenheart L, Hall W, Teesson M, Lynskey M. Alcohol use disorders in Australia: findings from the National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being. NDARC Technical Report No. 97; 2000.