



MEDIA RELEASE
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NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO CALLS FOR A SUGAR TAX

The Australian Beverages Council, representing the nation's non-alcoholic drinks industry, has responded to the recent call from the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and other groups for a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages.

"The non-alcoholic drinks industry has been proudly leading the nation's reformulation agenda and is the only category in the shopping trolley which has its own sugar reduction pledge aimed at providing Australians with more choice of drinks with no and low sugar" said Geoff Parker, CEO of the Australian Beverages Council.

"Since the pledge was launched in 2018, Australia's leading non-alcoholic drink companies¹ have reduced sugar across their portfolios by more than 16% on average between 2015 and 2021, which places them well on track to achieve the 20% sugar reduction target by 2025," said Parker.

Parker said the sugar reduction pledge is an unprecedented commitment and an Australian first that's having a positive impact in households and communities nationwide. The pledge demonstrates that the non-alcoholic drinks industry is willing to play its part and work constructively with policy makers on effective, non-inflationary measures which will encourage consumers to make healthier choices.

"The evidence demonstrates people are drinking less sugar-sweetened beverages, but without the increase in the cost of the weekly shop and even more pressure on households grappling with the soaring cost of living.

"The latest sugar reduction [report](#)² released in April this year found that for the first time in Australia, no and low sugar options account for half of all sales, up from 47% the previous year. This significant result reinforces consumption trends uncovered in previously published [research](#)³ on more than two decades of drink consumption in Australia; research which revealed a long-term shift in Australians' non-alcoholic drink choices over the period. This corroborates the results of the two previous Australian Health Surveys (1995 & 2011-12) which has shown significant decreases in people consuming sugar-sweetened drinks in favour of drinks with no and low sugar including water.

"These types of discriminatory and regressive taxes are a last century fix to a complex and contemporary problem which will only raise the cost of the weekly shop for households that can least afford it.

"In 2022 we need smarter, real-world evidence-based solutions to multi-factorial problems like obesity rather than slapping a last century tax on the weekly shop of Australians. The drinks industry urges other categories in the shopping trolley to make their own commitments and play their part in helping people choose healthier options," said Parker.

¹ Asahi Lifestyle Beverages (formerly Schweppes Australia), Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, PepsiCo and The Coca-Cola Company

² <https://www.australianbeverages.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ABCL-Sugar-Reduction-Pledge-Report-CY2021.pdf>

³ <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/12/4/1016/htm>

ABOUT: The Australian Beverages Council Ltd (ABCL) is the peak body representing the non-alcoholic beverage industry. Our Membership comprises of micro, small, medium-sized and large companies. Collectively these companies produce over 95% of the industry's volume. Our members make a substantial \$7+ billion contribution to the Australian economy each year, and nationally employ over 46,000FTEs. Every one job in the industry supports 4.9 jobs in the supply chain.

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