

Tackling alcohol abuse

Tue, May 22, 2012

Sir, – In response to Dr William Flannery (May 21st), the Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland (ABFI) in no way sought to undermine the work of the National Substance Misuse Strategy Group by issuing our own minority report.

Those who have read our report would have immediately noted that ABFI supported the overwhelming majority of the final recommendations. We do so because even though overall alcohol consumption has declined by 19 per cent over the past decade, we recognise society's legitimate concerns surrounding misuse, and teenage and binge drinking in particular.

However, our industry has long-standing objections to a number of the proposals contained in the final report which we consider to be misdirected. If implemented, these proposals will hit the average consumer who enjoys alcohol responsibly, will impact on the 62,000 jobs and €2 billion tax revenue that the drinks industry supports across the economy, and will do little or nothing to address alcohol misuse. Such proposals include banning sponsorship and advertising by drinks companies which are already undertaken in Ireland under some of the strictest codes of practice anywhere in the world. Our objections are shared by many of the main sporting and cultural organisations throughout the country and a number of government departments.

Given our industry's our commitment to responsibility, our contribution to the economy, and the fact that we produce some of Ireland's most successful international brands, it is entirely legitimate that we play our part in the debate on misuse and that we continue to engage with Government. For that reason, I would encourage readers to review our minority report alongside with the final National Substance Misuse Strategy Group report and make up their own minds. – Yours, etc,

JEAN DOYLE,

Acting Director,

Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland,

Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2.

© 2012 The Irish Times