**Senate Inquiry statement by Paul Klarenaar, Director for the Australian Health Promotion Association, 20 November 2015:**

Health promotion is about creating conditions that enable our whole population to be healthy and happy.

‘Personal choice and freedom’ is *vital* for health and happiness. But personal freedom is *much more* than simply doing what we want, when we want.

To have personal freedom, we need to feel safe, secure, healthy, supported and in-touch with our community.

On their website, the Liberal Democrats state that we should be free from harassment and physical harm. We agree with this.

To be *truly* free from harassment and physical harm, we need to be able walk down our street:

* Without fear of being assaulted by someone who’s drunk.
* And not be exposed to cigarette smoke.
* We need to be free from addiction to nicotine and alcohol.
* Free from the fear that our children will be harassed by cigarette and alcohol advertising.
* We need to be able to walk down our street, free from the fear of being rundown by a speeding or drunk driver.
* We need to be free from being restricted by chronic disease and obesity.

By and large Australia has achieved this level of personal freedom because we have responsible, careful regulation and legislation that greatly reduces our exposure to harm and improves our health. There is clear, *independent*, reliable and credible evidence to justify these regulations:

* Alcohol licence restrictions and lock-out laws reduce the danger of being assaulted.
* Smoke free public spaces reduce our exposure to deadly tobacco smoke.
* Advertising restrictions and plain packaging reduce the chance of our children taking-up and becoming addicted to tobacco - something which kills two out of three regular smokers.
* Speed limits, seat belts and random breath testing make our streets infinitely safer.
* The implementation of mandatory food labelling, salt limits and junk food advertising restrictions *would* lead to a significant reduction in obesity and chronic disease.

These regulations *might* restrict our choice and be inconvenient from time to time, but we accept them as a society because we know they are for the *greater good.* These are the actions of an advanced, compassionate society that cares for our most vulnerable, such as the young, the old, the disabled, the poor, the mentally ill and our indigenous population.

From a population health perspective, these regulations are the most *cost-effective* way to save tens of thousands of Australian lives every year. To remove these regulations would greatly increase our exposure to harassment and physical harm, and send us back to the wild west, where it’s everyone for themselves and no-one feels safe and free.