

Submission to the Strategy Unit / Department of Health  
Consultation Document  
on the  
National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy  
*Anheuser-Busch Companies, St. Louis, Missouri*

The very first sentence of the National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy (NAHRS) Consultation Document acknowledges that the vast majority of adults consume alcohol responsibly. For this reason, it is important that the NAHRS not implement ‘feel-good’ policies that restrict the responsible consumption of the majority due to the actions of a small, problematic minority. For the NAHRS to be most effective, a thorough examination of what actually reduces abusive consumption is vitally important. Anheuser-Busch, therefore appreciates the opportunity to comment on the United Kingdom’s efforts because as the world’s largest brewer and leader in responsible consumption programs, we have valuable experience that might be of use to the UK as it embarks on the development of a long-term strategy to reduce abusive consumption. Consider the following information:

**An Introduction to Anheuser-Busch**

Anheuser-Busch Companies, based in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, is the world’s largest brewer with \$15 billion in annual sales, producing 107.2 million barrels (125.8 million hectoliters) of beer worldwide. We are the largest brewer in the United States, operating 12 breweries with a domestic market share of over 48%. Anheuser-Busch produces over 30 different brands, including our flagship brand, Budweiser.

Outside of the US, we own two breweries, including the Stag Brewery in Richmond, London and the Budweiser Wuhan International Brewery in Wuhan, China. We also have partnerships with other brewers and distributors in Canada, Mexico, South America, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Japan and South Korea. Our breweries, partnerships and export distribution result in a worldwide distribution of our products in over 80 countries.

Anheuser-Busch employs approximately 25,000 people worldwide and pays hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes each year to national and local governments. We purchase raw materials such as barley and hops from local sources and use local businesses like malting companies to add value to the production chain. The ripple effects of these contributions to economies around the world are immeasurable.

However, above and beyond its tax and payroll contributions, Anheuser-Busch has long contributed in other ways to the communities where we work and live. From sharing our responsible consumption programs with industry and government officials, to supporting local and national sports teams to contributing to educational scholarships, we have and will continue to support our local communities.

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**Making A Difference**

As the world's number one brewer, Anheuser-Busch is committed to the responsible consumption of our beers by adults and in reducing alcohol abuse, drunk driving and underage drinking. No company benefits when its products are misused. Our company's employees, too, are raising children, living and working in communities around the world, and driving the same highways as everyone else. Alcohol abuse, drunk driving and underage drinking are problems we would all like to see solved.

In looking at these problems in American society, two basic prevention approaches have emerged: the control model and the socio-cultural model. The control model follows an abstinence approach and focuses on implementing restrictions on alcohol's availability and industry marketing efforts, such as the Prohibition measures implemented in the United States between 1920 and 1933. Anheuser-Busch supports the socio-cultural model. This approach focuses on reinforcing personal responsibility through education and awareness efforts, recognizing that behaviors are influenced by social norms. This means holding individuals accountable for their actions and not blaming the product for its misuse.

At Anheuser-Busch, our commitment to fighting alcohol abuse dates back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when we began our campaign "Budweiser Means Moderation." In 1982, our company began its *Know When To Say When* campaign and was the first in the industry to bring responsibility messages to network television in 1985 with our *Know When To Say When* commercials. In the late 1980s, we instituted our campaign *Let's Stop Underage Drinking Before It Starts*. In 1999, we introduced our *We All Make A Difference* advertising campaign, which now serves as the umbrella theme for our alcohol abuse prevention efforts.

Our initiatives address the four main issue areas – underage-drinking prevention; drunk-driving prevention; college issues; and promotion of responsible drinking for adults – and we use a variety of techniques to reach our audiences with the appropriate message. Our national advertising includes radio, Internet and television spots placed in some of the most-watched programs, such as the Super Bowl, the Academy Awards, and the Olympic Games, as well as key morning news programs and evening dramas. Print ads in leading magazines and newspapers and outdoor signage round out our advertising portfolio.

We have also developed more than two-dozen community-based programs as well as retailer point-of-sale materials that are used in the marketplace by Anheuser-Busch's network of 600 independent beer wholesalers across the United States to reach consumers in their local markets. Public relations and communications efforts supporting our advertising and programs are also key in helping promote the responsibility message. The enclosed CD-ROM (Exhibit A) explains

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all of our programs in full detail, and much of this information is also available on our web site, [www.beeresponsible.com](http://www.beeresponsible.com).

In addition, we partner with a variety of organizations, both governmental and non-profit, because tackling these problems requires a team approach that involves parents, teachers, community organizations, law enforcement officials, the alcohol beverage industry, treatment and prevention authorities, the entertainment industry and many others. Anheuser-Busch and its wholesalers are committed members of this team through our investment of more than \$400 million (approximately £265 million) since 1982.

Thanks to concerted education and awareness efforts on the part of all of these groups, the incidence of alcohol abuse in the United States has declined significantly in the past two decades as indicated by decreases in drunk driving, teen drunk driving and underage drinking. Annual tracking of these measures is provided by a variety of government agencies and academic institutions through government funding.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, drunk-driving fatalities among the general population are down 37 percent since 1982, when the government first began tracking this data as drunk driving became a national issue. Likewise, teen drunk-driving fatalities have declined 60 percent during this same time period.

In addition, the percentage of high-school seniors who reported having a drink in the last 30 days is down 30 percent since 1982, according to the University of Michigan "Monitoring the Future" Study. Drinking among the college population is also measured, and the percentage of college freshmen (first year students) who say they drink beer frequently or occasionally is down 36 percent since 1982 and is at its lowest level since tracking began in 1966, according to the American Freshman Survey, sponsored by the University of California-Los Angeles and the American Council on Education. (See Exhibits B-E). These statistics as well as others can be found on our website [www.alcoholstats.com](http://www.alcoholstats.com).

In the area of underage drinking, annual surveys of teens in the United States indicate that parents still have the greatest power on their children's decisions about drinking. According to the Roper Youth Report, which is a semi-annual survey done by a nationally recognized polling organization, 71 percent of 8-17 year-olds and 66 percent of 13-17 year olds cite their parents as the No. 1 influence in this area. That is followed far behind by best friends, teachers, brothers and sisters and what they see on television. What they see in ads ranks at the bottom. (See Exhibits F-G)

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Noting this “parent power,” Anheuser-Busch has worked with authorities in the areas of education, family counseling, and alcohol treatment to develop our “Family Talk” program. Designed to help parents talk with their children about drinking, this program encourages open and honest communication on the subject with its parent guide and video. Since Family Talk was introduced in 1990, Anheuser-Busch and its wholesalers have distributed more than 5.7 million copies of its program materials. In a recent survey of parents who had received the program, 98% of parents said it is important for parents to talk to their children about drinking; 94% of parents would recommend the Family Talk program to other parents; and 92% of parents agreed that the program is an effective way to help prevent underage drinking.

On the college front, the legal drinking age of 21 in the United States splits the university population. Our company’s position is clear: if students are 21 and older and choose to drink, we want them to do so responsibly. If they’re under 21, we want them to respect themselves and the law. We know from the Roper Youth Report that 70 percent of college-bound youth in the United States cite their parents as the leading influence on their decisions about whether they drink alcohol or not (Exhibit H). In turn, Anheuser-Busch created an extension of our “Family Talk” program called “College Talk” designed to help parents continue communicating openly and honestly with their children on the subject of drinking as their students prepare for the next phase in independence and begin a life on their own. This program was developed by authorities in the fields of education, family therapy, student health and well being, alcohol treatment and social norms marketing and through conversations with parents and students.

In addition, a “social norms” movement on college campuses over the past several years is gaining significant momentum for helping change abusive drinking behavior of college students in the United States. Based on scientific research of students’ perceptions of drinking behaviors vs. their actual behaviors, this approach stresses the fact that most students of legal age who choose to drink, do so responsibly. Now being employed at many university and college campuses nationwide, including Georgetown University, the University of Virginia, Dartmouth University, the University of Missouri, and Florida State University, this social norms approach has helped students see that the majority of them, in fact, drink two or fewer drinks per week. This message is relayed to students using a variety of communications vehicles, from advertising in student newspapers, to posters, to in-class presentations, to orientation programs with new students and more. After implementing these programs, students’ behavior has changed, and campuses have seen declines in abusive drinking. Exhibit I is an article from *USA Today* written by Michael Haines, the father of the social norms marketing movement, which gives specific examples of these initiatives in action. More information is also available at [www.socialnorms.org](http://www.socialnorms.org), which is the web site for the National Social Norms Resource Center. Anheuser-Busch has provided the center with funding to support grants to universities across the country that choose to implement social norms programs on their campuses. Likewise,

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American media have also recognized the potential of social norms and the progress made in reducing alcohol abuse (Exhibit J).

Backed by a significant investment over the past two decades in all of the programs listed above and many others, Anheuser-Busch leads the alcohol beverage industry worldwide in the fight against alcohol abuse. Our commitment on the responsibility front will continue in the future as we work to make a difference in the fight against alcohol abuse.

### **Alcohol and Advertising**

To be sure, advertising is an essential component of most successful businesses. It helps producers distinguish their products from other similar brands and it gives consumers critical information about the products they buy. The same is true for advertising in the brewing industry. Marketing our brands helps our adult consumers choose a single brand among the many choices available.

Anheuser-Busch has developed its own international advertising and marketing code (Exhibit K), based on the Advertising and Marketing Code of the Beer Institute, a trade organization representing the United States' largest brewers. We follow the laws and customs of the countries where we do business, and our advertising and promotional activities are always responsible and in good taste.

As mentioned in the previous section, Anheuser-Busch also has a longstanding tradition of using advertising as a way to deliver messages promoting responsible consumption for adults who choose to drink. The truth of the matter is that we want our products to be enjoyed responsibly and legally by adults. And the vast majority of our products are consumed in such a manner.

Contrary to the claims made by some, research has shown that advertising does *not* influence a person's decision of whether to drink or refrain from drinking. When it comes to the role of advertising on underage consumption and alcohol abuse, this issue has been studied extensively by a variety of government organizations and independent researchers, and no cause-and-effect relationship has been established. Exhibit L gives a detailed list of literature cites on this issue. Further, despite large increases in advertising expenditures since the 1970's, major indicators of alcohol abuse and underage drinking have continued to decline significantly in the United States.

Finally, Anheuser-Busch agrees with the United Kingdom's approach of encouraging those who consume alcohol to do so responsibly using the government's sensible drinking message. However, we do not agree with the approach taken by some in the industry that believe packaging should be labeled with the number of defined "units" in the package. This practice can only confuse the consumer into thinking that all beverages are the same – and there is a vast

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difference between how, when and by whom beer, wine and spirits are consumed. The consumer should not be misled into thinking that a bottle of whiskey with an alcohol content of 40% is the same as a pint of 5% lager. Unit labeling – while perhaps viewed by some as a way to advertise responsible consumption – can only blur the distinctions between the different forms of alcohol. Let's be clear, all alcohol beverages are not the same. Most spirits-based drinks such as a martini, whiskey or gin and tonic contains considerably more alcohol than a 330 ml bottle of beer.

**Summary**

Distinctions should be made between the responsible use of alcohol and alcohol abuse. Policies whose only goal it is to reduce overall consumption will not only affect tens of thousands of hard working people and hurt government revenues but could also potentially deprive those who consume moderately and responsibly from certain well-documented health benefits (see Exhibit L for a complete list of literature cites).

There is no question that alcohol policy should respect the current cultural and political environment – as well as acknowledge the historical distinctions between the different types of alcohol. However, alcohol policy should also reflect facts and consider sound science and should not be based on the flawed premise that advertising influences behavior. Relying on anecdotal evidence or sensationalized stories in the media leads us all away from the path of improvement. Reductions in alcohol abuse can be achieved if we work together – because truly, we can all make a difference.

Anheuser-Busch would be very pleased to discuss details of our programs and this submission with your office. Please feel free to contact Amie Gianino at 1.314.577.2301 or [amie.gianino@anheuser-busch.com](mailto:amie.gianino@anheuser-busch.com) for additional information.