



# Pressure against alcohol sponsors

MELBOURNE — Australia's biggest sporting leagues are under pressure to drop alcohol sponsorship after a dozen other codes effectively banned similar types of advertising and support.

Twelve leading sporting organisations — soccer, basketball, netball, swimming, cycling, hockey and others — have agreed to end all existing and future alcohol sponsorship agreements.

In exchange, the groups will share \$25 million in replacement government funding taken from alcopops tax revenues.

But the nation's biggest sports organisations — the AFL, NRL and Cricket Australia — have not yet signed up to the program, prompting alcohol opponents to push for a similar approach.

"We urge the remaining sports such as AFL, NRL and cricket to start discussions with the government as to how they too can move away from their present role in exposing children to alcohol promotion," said Professor

Mike Daube, co-chairman of the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol.

Sports Minister Kate Lundy, who announced the Be The Influence strategy yesterday, said more sporting groups were not part of the initiative partly due to funding issues. "With \$25 million available, this is the best we can do," she said.

She did, however, praise the three big leagues for their efforts in trying to reduce binge drinking.

"They are all carrying a responsible drinking message," she said.

The AFL recently announced a 10-year extension to a sponsorship deal with Carlton United Brewers.

Cricket Australia has been sponsored by VB for years while the NRL has commercial partnerships with Fosters and Diageo, which makes Bundaberg Rum.

NRL spokesman John Brady said he hoped the government would invest more funding in harm prevention groups rather than target sports sponsorship programs.