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# New bid for more tax on casks

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WA LIBERAL Senator Alan Eggleston has renewed calls for wine to be taxed by volume rather than price in a bid to reduce alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities.

Senator Eggleston said an increased tax on cask wine would be a fairer way to reduce alcohol-related harm than by prohibition, echoing calls he and the Australian Medical Association made 12 months ago.

"Currently, wine from flagons is taxed at about six cents per standard drink, compared with beer which is taxed at about 43 cents," Senator Eggleston said.

The disparity was due to higher percentage alcohol in cask wine, about 12 per cent, compared with beer at an average of 3 per cent.

"During my two decades as a GP practising in Port Hedland I often witnessed the destruction alcohol brought on families and communities," he said.

"It seems obvious that increased tax on cask wine will reduce consumption and is a more equitable solution than selectively reducing alcohol consumption on racial grounds."

He said an overhaul of wine tax should be considered as an alternative to plans by the State Government in Queensland to prohibit alcohol in selected Aboriginal communities.

A group from the remote Aboriginal community of Mapoon on the Cape York Peninsula is taking the Queensland State Government to court opposing the limit of one carton of light beer and two litres or wine per vehicle.

Senator Eggleston said in 1999 a Curtin University study into cask wine drinking in the Northern Territory found that consumption dropped significantly when a levy was introduced.

He said the existing system encouraged alcohol abuse that cost Australian taxpayers billions of dollars a year.

WA liquor licensing director Hugh Highman has limited cask wine to one two-litre cask per person in several regional towns, including Halls Creek, Derby, Port Hedland and Meekatharra.

The Wine Industry Association of WA said the type of tax change proposed by Senator Eggleston would not have a major effect in WA.

It was more concerned about lowering the tax on premium wines for WA's smaller producers.