

Booze levy call to help fund law services

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BIG gambling and alcohol companies should pay a levy to help fund legal services, according to a peak lawyers group.

The Australian Bar Association will lobby State and Federal governments to use a "special industry levy" as an alternative source of income to combat a growing funding crisis in Legal Aid and other legal services due to the link between gambling, drugs, alcohol and court workloads.

It comes as key services like Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres as well as courts are overwhelmed with cases where drinking, drug abuse and gambling are at the centre of offending and litigation.

A high income corporation levy and speeding fine levy are two more alternatives the ABA wants to investigate.

The ABA's Access to Justice Committee chairwoman Jacoba Brasch, QC, said governments should not be "let off the hook" but new revenue raising ideas were needed.

"We know there is a huge correlation between alcohol, drugs and gambling across whole areas of law," she said.

"It's not just the person being drunk at midnight who punches someone else who ends up in the criminal system, we see it in domestic violence courts, family law and right down to personal injuries cases.

"And the fact is that some of the companies involved in terms of gambling and alcohol

make huge amounts of money, so it's really about a corporate conscience."

The alternative ideas came out of a meeting of Bar Associations from around the country and other key players like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service and Community Legal Centres.