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## South Australian Drink Branding Sparks Industry Concerns

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A South Australian distillery has come under scrutiny over branding similarities between its alcoholic beverages and a popular local soft drink brand, raising concerns within the beverage industry and sparking debate on marketing ethics and consumer safety.

Higher Vision, a Roxby Downs-based producer, recently launched a line of alcoholic drinks under the branding “Halls with a Twist”, featuring products such as “Round The Twist” and “Fruity Punch”. The packaging of these beverages bears noticeable resemblance to the

well-known Halls soft drinks, with similar colours, fonts, and naming conventions. A scotch and “Classic Cola” variant is also included in the range.

Company founder Chad Oldfield denied any intentional brand imitation. “It’s not something that I looked at when I did it,” Oldfield told local media. “You see them as similar, I don’t.”

But industry experts say the situation could have broader implications for product differentiation and regulatory compliance in Australia’s alcohol sector. Jacqueline Bowden, a public health expert at Flinders University, warned that the branding may appeal to underage consumers, drawing parallels to the case of Hard Solo, which was forced to rebrand after regulatory pressure.

“These products should not be on the market,” Bowden stated. “We know that alcohol brands resembling soft drinks increase appeal among younger audiences.”

Halls, which experienced a successful market revival in 2023, is considered one of South Australia’s strongest legacy beverage brands. Its current owner, Cameron Ballard, distanced his company from the alcoholic product line, stating there is no formal partnership or financial involvement with Higher Vision.

“Halls is a family brand, and we have no intention of making ‘Hard Halls,’” Ballard said. He added that while Higher Vision is permitted to reference certain shared ingredients and bottling facilities, the appearance of collaboration on the label was authorized as a commercial agreement.

The case highlights a growing tension in the beverage industry between independent alcohol producers and legacy soft drink brands, particularly where shared bottling infrastructure or regional suppliers blur the lines of brand identity.

As the alcohol market becomes more competitive, experts say stricter branding regulations may be needed to prevent consumer confusion and maintain brand integrity. No formal action has yet been taken by state or federal regulators, but the issue may prompt broader scrutiny of co-branding practices and ethical marketing in Australia’s food and beverage economy.