



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education



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MEDIA RELEASE

STUDY TO EXPOSE CANBERRA'S ALCOHOL VIOLENCE HOTSPOTS

07 March 2017: One in seven presentations to ACT emergency departments are alcohol-related.

Now a new national study will reveal where those harms are occurring, which alcohol outlets cause the most harm, and how ACT policing can best target its violence prevention efforts.

'Driving Change' aims to record the drug and alcohol intake and place of last drinks, of patients presenting to emergency departments at Calvary Hospital and seven other hospitals across Australia.

The study is based on the 'Cardiff Model' of violence prevention first trialled in the UK from 2002 to 2007, which contributed to substantial reductions in assault and injury in the city of Cardiff, now operates in more than 80 per cent of the UK's emergency departments.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is co-hosting a Driving Change forum with the Australian Medical Association (ACT), Deakin University, Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) and the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) today, which will highlight the burden faced by Canberra's emergency workers and police due to alcohol.

Professor Jonathan Shepherd, who led the Cardiff Model in the UK, and will present at the Driving Change forum at the ACT Legislative Assembly, says the Cardiff model exemplifies the powerful strategic role that health sector data collection can play in reducing violence.

"What we found in the UK, is that a considerable number of violent assault victims present to hospitals, for treatment, yet for a variety of reasons those patients are not reporting those incidents to police. The anonymous collection of that data at Calvary Hospital Emergency Department will ensure that police can better target their resources, that violent hotspots will come under greater attention, and that policy makers can introduce targeted and evidence-informed measures to address those violent hotspots with great precision," Professor Shepherd said.

Importantly, the Driving Change study will capture both information about alcohol purchased on-licence as well as from packaged (takeaway) outlets.

Alcohol related violence in the home, while less visible, is as much a concern in the ACT as alcohol-related street violence. Between July 2009 and June 2014, almost a quarter (23.9%) of family and domestic violence incidents attended by ACT police were alcohol-related.



FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn agrees that the Driving Change initiative is an important opportunity to identify high-risk Canberra venues and implement meaningful legislation to address alcohol-fuelled problem areas.

“We know there are trouble spots where violence occurs in Canberra’s night scene, which to date have not been adequately addressed by the ACT Government. Our hope is that armed with data from the Driving Change study, decision makers will be better informed and motivated to implement effective amendments to the liquor act to reduce alcohol-related violence and harm in the nation’s capital,” he said.

Across a 12-month period to September 2016, police recorded a total of 2,810 offences—or 60 a week – involving alcohol across the capital.

Research conducted in 2016 revealed that alcohol-related crime was estimated to cost ACT taxpayers \$11.7 million dollars each year.

Professor Steve Robson, President of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) ACT branch, hopes the results from the Driving Change study will open the ACT Government’s eyes to the daily reality of Canberra’s frontline emergency workers.

“The reluctance of the ACT Government to introduce 3am last drinks in the ACT is at odds with the carnage witnessed by police, ambos, doctors and nurses every day. The old adage - nothing good happens after midnight is very true, and I invite the Chief Minister to spend a night with our police on the beat or at Calvary Hospital’s emergency department to experience the very real level of harm that exists here in Canberra,” Professor Robson said.

MEDIA DOORSTOP: *Calvary Hospital at 9:00am, on Tuesday 7 March. Media to assemble at: **Calvary Hospital** – Turning Circle directly outside Emergency Department, Haydon Drive & Belconnen Way, Bruce*

FORUM: *A panel of experts and industry leaders including Professor Jonathan Shepherd [who led the Cardiff Model in the UK] will present at a Driving Change forum at 10:30am on Tuesday, 7 March at the ACT Legislative Assembly.*

Professor Shepherd, Mr Thorn and Professor Robson are available for interview.

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. Over 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation’s greatest preventive health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.