

## Media Release

### **ABORIGINAL INQUIRY MUST EXAMINE ALCOHOL INDUSTRY ROLE**

**28 August, 2014:** An Inquiry examining the harmful use of alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be called upon to explore the culpability of the alcohol industry.

With alcohol harms continuing to devastate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) has urged the Commonwealth Government Inquiry to examine the alcohol supply chain and investigate the industry role in supplying alcohol to communities where harms are most significant.

Alcohol use leads to substantial harms across Australia to both drinkers and non-drinkers alike, but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately affected, with deaths from alcohol-related causes 7.5 times greater than to other Australians.

Ahead of his appearance today before the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says that countless reviews have examined the role of Government and the responsibility of drinkers, but repeatedly overlooked the responsibility of the alcohol industry.

"Past reviews into alcohol harms on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples examined the role of government and individuals but have failed to examine the industry's responsibility for the alcohol-related violence, illness and death. If we are to address this national shame, we need to first acknowledge that there is an alcohol industry that profits every day from the misery and suffering, and then we need to fully explore the alcohol industry's culpability," Mr Thorn said.

In its submission to the Inquiry, FARE has called on the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs to request data on supply practices from alcohol producers, distributors and retailers.

"Too little is known about the alcohol industry's supply practices. The only way to fully gauge the alcohol industry's role in targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is for governments to mandate that the alcohol industry make its supply data publically and continually available. If industry has nothing to hide, it will not resist such a call," Mr Thorn said.

FARE's submission makes a further 31 recommendations, including the introduction of community-driven Alcohol Management Plans in areas where a need has been identified and agreed, and calls for a new National Alcohol Strategy, informed by the World Health Organization's *Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol*.

Mr Thorn says FARE's tangible and practical recommendations, if adopted, would go a significant way to addressing the flow of alcohol into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that are significantly affected by harms.

“This Inquiry is an opportunity to address the impacts of alcohol-related harm on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and one that can’t be squandered. The inequality being experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can and must be reduced, but to do so requires cooperation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, and a long term commitment to overcoming what is systemic and intergenerational disadvantage,” Mr Thorn said.

**Michael Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) is 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 preventative 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.

For further information visit FARE’s website: [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au).