

COVID-19: WA PREMIER SHOWS LEADERSHIP ON ADDRESSING ALCOHOL HARM

26 March 2020: Western Australian Premier Mark McGowan has been congratulated for strong leadership, with his announcement to place limits on takeaway alcohol to assist with the state's COVID-19 response.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) CEO Caterina Giorgi say the Premier's decision acknowledges the high risk of increased alcohol-fuelled harm in the community as a consequence of COVID-19.

"COVID-19 is abruptly changing how we live, which is contributing to heightened anxiety, stress and fear. Already across Australia there are reports of 'panic buying' and 'stockpiling' of alcohol, with some data suggesting that alcohol sales are up 20 per cent from last year," Ms Giorgi said.

"Higher levels of alcohol consumption, combined with this unprecedented public health emergency and its impacts, will fuel more alcohol harm if we don't take action to prevent this," she said.

Ms Giorgi says strong leaders are those who can deal with an unfolding crisis and also act to prevent future harm.

"Premier McGowan has done this by acknowledging that social isolation and the devastating impacts of COVID-19 elevate the risks of alcohol-fuelled harm in the home and throughout our communities," Ms Giorgi said.

Ms Giorgi says the violence and injury caused by alcohol use only increases the burden on our already stretched emergency and primary health care system.

"At a time when our health services are focused on COVID-19, we need to ensure that we aren't putting additional pressure on these services," Ms Giorgi said.

"It would be an even greater tragedy if the fallout from COVID-19 was made far worse through a significant escalation of alcohol-fuelled harm in our community," she said.

Caterina Giorgi is available for interview. Contact: Clare Ross 0429 291120

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. Nearly 6,000 lives are lost every year and more than 144,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventive health challenges.