



## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

# ELECTION FORUM NO SHOW: LAST MINUTE SNUB SPARKS CONCERN ALCOHOL REFORMS NO LONGER A PRIORITY FOR BAIRD GOVERNMENT

**05 March 2015:** The NSW Government has pulled out of a NSW Election Forum on alcohol policy just twenty-four hours before the event, sparking concerns that the NSW Government has lost its thirst for progressive lifesaving alcohol measures.

Invited to attend the election forum three months ago, the Government gave an assurance as recently as Monday that it would take part in the public event.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) says the Government's late withdrawal is a sign the coalition may be divided on the issue of alcohol policy.

Tonight's NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) election forum in Sydney was supposed to provide communities with an opportunity to see exactly where the parties stand on alcohol policy ahead of the State Election, however the Government's no show will now leave voters in the dark regarding the Government's real intentions.

FARE's Director of Policy and Research, Caterina Giorgi says the Government's unwillingness to nominate a single political representative from among their 80 members of parliament is extremely disappointing.

"The NSW Governments failure to attend tonight's alcohol policy election forum and it's unwillingness to find a single one of its 80 members of parliament to represent the Coalition at tonight's event suggests alcohol policy is not a priority for the Government ahead of this month's election," Ms Giorgi said.

In sharp contrast, Ms Giorgi says it is a priority issue for the people of NSW, with polling by FARE finding that a vast majority of NSW residents (73%) want the major parties to outline their plans to address alcohol-related harms prior to the 2015 NSW State Election.

"New South Wales voters have a right to know what the major parties intend to do to address alcohol harms. 71% of NSW residents think more should be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol, and tonight is an opportunity for NSW politicians to stand up and speak up on this issue," Ms Giorgi said.

This follows the lukewarm response to a recent NAAPA campaign asking individual State MP's to pledge support for the alcohol policy measures announced by the Government in January 2014 which to date has received support from only one National MP and one Liberal MP.



Foundation for Alcohol  
Research & Education

With 31% of NSW residents having been affected by alcohol-related violence, Caterina Giorgi says this is an issue that touches many people in NSW, and has appealed to Premier Baird to intervene to ensure that the Government is represented at the Forum.

“Tonight, we are asking State Politicians to stand before the people of NSW; the police, the nurses, the residents and the parents; to listen to their concerns about alcohol and to explain how these will be addressed. Those people deserve more than a deafening silence from the Government and I would implore the Premier to step in and ensure that the Coalition is represented,” Ms Giorgi said.

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Tonight’s forum will feature a panel of political representatives – including The Hon. Sophie Cotsis MLC (Shadow Minister for Local Government and Shadow Minister for Mental Health), Dr John Kaye MLC (Greens Spokesperson on Health), and Reverend The Hon. Fred Nile MLC (President of the Christian Democratic Party).

**Thursday 5 March 2015 Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm**  
**Salvation Army’s Sydney Congress Hall Function Centre**  
**140 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW 2000**

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**Caterina Giorgi is available for comment.**

**Media Contact:** **Jeremy Henderson**  
0425 559 710  
[Jeremy.Henderson@fare.org.au](mailto:Jeremy.Henderson@fare.org.au)

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.