



MEDIA RELEASE

ELECTION 2016: PREVENT ALCOHOL HARM AND PROTECT AUSSIE FAMILIES

27 May 2016: Australia's leading alcohol harm prevention organisation has today called on all political parties to take action to protect children and families from the devastating effects of alcohol.

With more than a million Australian children affected by the drinking of others and approximately half of all reported domestic violence incidents involving alcohol, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) will appeal to all major parties to commit to action ahead of the July Federal election.

Launched today, FARE's 2016 election platform *Hidden harm: Targeting alcohol's impact on children and families* highlights Australia's concern about the devastating impact of alcohol on children, families and communities and the strong support among Australians for meaningful action to address those harms.

Although often a 'hidden harm' occurring behind closed doors, alcohol's impact on children and families is well understood and well documented.

Of the 22 per cent of all Australian children who are affected by the drinking of others, 140,000 are substantially affected and more than 10,000 are in the child protection system because of a carer's drinking.

Chief Executive Michael Thorn says that the harm caused by alcohol is largely preventable and can no longer be overlooked.

"All children should have a safe, supportive and caring environment so that they can fully contribute to the community as they grow. While this should be the norm in any country, we are currently failing our children on many levels and alcohol has a role in this," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says achieving that is unlikely in the current environment where aggressive alcohol marketing and promotion has been left unregulated, liquor outlet density left unchecked, and alcohol priced cheaper than bottled water.

FARE's election platform calls for action in five areas: preventing alcohol-related family violence, protecting young people from alcohol advertising and sponsorship, increasing efforts to prevent, diagnose and manage Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), implementing nation-wide public education campaigns, and overdue reform of Australia's alcohol tax system to provide a funding base to invest in measures that keep our children and families safe.

New national polling suggests that a vast majority of Australians think that we have a problem with alcohol (78 per cent), with 79 per cent concerned about alcohol-related violence, 64 per cent concerned about alcohol's involvement in child abuse and neglect and 50 per cent concerned about the impact of alcohol on unborn babies.

FARE polling on these issues has highlighted that governments have fallen behind prevailing community sentiment.

A vast majority of Australian voters (70 per cent) support a ban on alcohol advertising on television before 8:30pm when young people are likely to be watching, including 72 per cent of ALP voters, 70 per cent of Coalition voters and 74 per cent of Greens voters.

Similarly, most Australians (60 per cent) support banning alcohol sponsorship at sporting events, including 61 per cent of ALP voters, 58 per cent of Coalition voters and 71 per cent of Greens voters.

Mr Thorn says the devastating impact of alcohol on the community is now well understood, but any action has been absent from the 2016 election campaign to date.

“There is precious little debate on community health and safety and on alcohol harm in particular. Polling shows Australians recognise that alcohol is contributing to death and violence on our streets and in our homes, its impact on our hospitals, the injury and disease. Australians now want their political leaders to act and, with an election fast approaching, I urge all parties to act to stop the harm from alcohol,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr 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.