

DANGEROUS COCKTAIL: Poll reveals Aussies in the dark on alcohol's link to harm

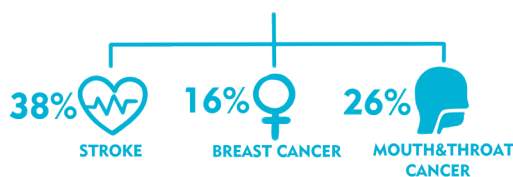
FARE's Annual Alcohol Poll is the nation's most comprehensive alcohol poll and examining Australians' attitudes towards alcohol, their consumption behaviours, awareness and experiences of alcohol harm, and perspectives on alcohol policies.

Now in its ninth year, the 2018 Poll revealed valuable information and insights that will help shape national alcohol policy and further academic research.

KEY FINDINGS

This year's poll revealed that Aussies are in the dark when it comes to the links between alcohol consumption and long-term harm.

Less than half of Australians are aware of the link between alcohol and disease, including stroke (38%), mouth and throat cancer (26%) and breast cancer (16%).



Although the majority of Australian adults (70%) indicate that they are aware of the current Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol, only one in four (28%) are also aware of the content.



The Poll also showed an overwhelming majority of Australians (84%) believe they have the right to know more about long-term harm associated with regular alcohol use with most people (80%) reporting governments have a responsibility to educate the community on the matter.

Aussies also recognise their rights as consumers to be informed, and they've made it clear the job can't be left to the alcohol industry. Unsurprisingly, most Australians (61%) believe that the alcohol industry would downplay independent university research findings linking alcohol consumption to a range of harm.



FARE's Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the Poll continues to show that Australians are concerned about alcohol's impact and want governments to do something about it.

"The 2018 Poll findings raise a number of red flags that the Commonwealth Government ignores at its peril," Mr Thorn said.

"There is a clear message here for government – Australians remain concerned about alcohol, want governments to do more, and demand, as consumers, the right to information that will keep them safe from harm."



Dear supporters,

FARE's Annual Alcohol Poll continues to provide valuable insights into community perspectives and behaviours relating to alcohol. While the Poll revealed a concerning lack of awareness of the long-term harm caused by alcohol, encouragingly there is keen interest from Australians to know more about this issue.

FARE stands with the community in calling upon governments to do a better job protecting the public from the harm associated with regular alcohol use.

So we applaud the bold decision of the NT government to introduce a minimum unit price on alcohol. The evidence has proven this measure to be a highly effective and targeted deterrent for those who drink at harmful levels.

Of course, alcohol harm is not limited to Australia.

Our African friends at the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance who joined our on-going campaign to end alcohol advertising in sport along with many others worldwide, are fighting similar battles to our own.

It's vital we unite to stop the harms caused by alcohol, and to that end I thank you for your continued support.

MINIMUM PRICE TO BRING MAXIMUM BENEFIT FOR THE NT

FARE congratulates the NT Government on its landmark decision to introduce a Minimum Unit Price (MUP) on alcohol from mid-2018.

A minimum unit price (also known as a floor price) is the lowest price at which alcohol can be sold. This means that no alcohol can be sold below this price, even as part of a special offer or deal.

Despite the evidence being strong for this measure, the Territory will become the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce a MUP.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the reforms announced in February will help tackle alcohol-fuelled violence and crime and represent a historic opportunity to address the Territory's number one social issue – the unacceptable level of alcohol harm that has ravaged the NT for generations.

“FARE together with public health advocates, doctors and law enforcement have long argued for an evidence-based approach to tackling what is simply an unacceptable and devastating level of alcohol harm in the Northern Territory,” Mr Thorn said.

“The Labor Government is to be congratulated for putting the evidence, and in turn, the health, welfare and safety of the people of the NT, ahead of all other interests.”

A minimum unit price reduces alcohol harm by increasing the price of the cheapest alcohol products that are preferred by heavy drinkers to reduce their consumption. Despite applying to all alcohol products, it has little or no effect on low or moderate drinkers.



Research in Canada and modelling undertaken by the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research for FARE has shown a MUP to be a highly targeted intervention that impacts everyone who drinks at harmful levels, regardless of their income level.

But it is crucial to get the settings right. This is because the effectiveness of a MUP depends not simply upon its introduction, but also on the level at which the price is set.

Monitoring the impact of the floor price will be critical to understanding how well it is working.

So it is welcome news that the government will be doing exactly that and is prepared to adjust the price if needed.

GLOBAL ALLIES IN THE FIGHT TO END ALCOHOL SPONSORSHIP IN SPORT

The FARE led campaign to ‘End Alcohol Advertising in Sport’ teamed up with the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA), to highlight the all too cosy relationship between sports and the alcohol industry.

Today, sport around the world is saturated with alcohol advertising. So much so, it’s becoming impossible to know where the game ends and the alcohol marketing begins.

With all the evidence showing that exposure to alcohol advertising is connected to young people drinking more and from an earlier age, this

harmful practice simply needs to end.

Encouragingly, communities from around the globe are uniting to put an end to alcohol advertising in sport.

SAAPA is a collaborative initiative between eight Southern African countries, which aims to address the challenge of harmonising and accelerating alcohol policy development in the region.

During the recent test series between Australia and South Africa, FARE was proud to be able to support SAAPA’s efforts to raise awareness of the impacts of alcohol ads on children.



SAAPA community members out in force during the third test between Australia and South Africa in Cape Town.

“We feel strongly that the message to ban alcohol advertising during sport is important to send out,” says Aadielah Maker Diedricks from SAAPA.

“And we are not alone. This is a global problem. We are pleased to have the support of FARE during this campaign.”

Sport has, and should always belong to the people. Let’s protect our kids by ending the promotion of alcohol brands. You can help end alcohol advertising in sport by contacting FARE.

REDUCING RISKY DRINKING IN UNIVERSITIES

FARE has joined forces with the Australian National University and the University of Canberra to stamp out dangerous drinking among university students with its new campaign, *Reduce Risky Drinking*.

Going live on Canberra university campuses in April and officially launching in May, the campaign aims to empower students with the truth about the levels of alcohol use among their peers to alter the social norms surrounding risky drinking.

Findings from a survey undertaken by FARE last year confirm that first-year university students overestimate the volume and frequency that their peers are drinking and increase their alcohol intake to fit in.

FARE Health Promotion Officer Susan Hickson says that by setting the record straight about misperceptions of alcohol use on campus *Reduce Risky Drinking* is helping students feel OK to say ‘no’ to another drink or even not drinking at all.

“Risky drinking behaviours can be highly visible, giving the impression that it is more common than it actually is,” she said.

“Less visible is the behaviour of people who don’t drink or who drink moderately. By providing information on actual drinking behaviour of students and their peers we hope to create a new norm that does not reinforce risky drinking.”



SOCIAL NORMS APPROACH

A ‘social norms’ approach to behavioural change recognises that behaviour is often shaped by beliefs about what others do and think; actions and attitudes conform towards the perceived ‘norm’ of friends and colleagues.

Social norms interventions (used by the *Reduce*

Risky Drinking campaign) attempt to correct misperceptions by providing information about the true prevalence of the behaviour – in this case, drinking alcohol.

A number of studies have found social norms based interventions to be associated with lowered levels of risky drinking among university students.

WHAT'S ON AT FARE

Reduce Risky Drinking campaign launch 11 May 2018 - Canberra

The official launch of the FARE campaign designed to create new social norms between university students and alcohol, and in turn, reduce risky drinking.

Pregnant Pause TV commercial release 13 May 2018 - Canberra

FARE is launching its new ACT TV commercial for the Pregnant Pause campaign. The ad features Canberra radio personality and campaign ambassador Kristen Henry from Mix 106.3.

Book Launch - Randomistas: How Radical Researchers Changes Our World 15 June 2018 - Canberra

Shadow Assistant Treasurer Andrew Leigh joins FARE to discuss the details of his new book. At the launch, you'll hear stories of radical researchers who overturned conventional wisdom in medicine, politics, economics and law enforcement.

Health Promotion Symposium 2018 - Better Practice, Better Placed 23-24 August - Canberra

The Symposium aims to encourage analysis and debate and provide opportunities to network, discuss, and share practices, research and policies that have led, or will lead, to better and more equitable population health outcomes.

2nd Australasian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) 2018 Conference 21 - 22 November - Western Australia

The conference aims to bring together academics, practitioners, service providers and community members with a personal experience of living with FASD to share their knowledge, build networks and learn new skills.

BOOK LAUNCH - TEACHING 'PROPER' DRINKING?



Dr Maggie Brady speaking at the launch of her new book.

Can people learn to drink differently?

This question is the premise of an important new book *Teaching 'Proper' Drinking? Clubs and pubs in Indigenous Australia*, which examines two historical approaches undertaken with Aboriginal people that sought to minimise alcohol harm by teaching people to drink in a 'civilised' manner.

The book's author Dr Maggie Brady is an Honorary Associate Professor at the Australian National University's Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, and a social anthropologist who has worked with Aboriginal people in many different regions of Australia.

Speaking at the launch of her new book at Parliament House co-hosted by FARE and ANU Press, Dr Brady explained that although much of the book is a social history as well as an ethnography, its subject matter is surprisingly relevant and "a reminder that there are echoes of the past in much of what we debate today."

You can get your copy of the book by calling ANU Press on 02 6125 0291



(Photos: Clockwise from top right)
Dr Jerry Schwab, Dr Maggie Brady, The Hon Warren Snowdon.