



Media Release

GOVERNMENT FAILS TO ACT ON LIQUOR ACT REVIEW

30 June 2013: The NSW Government has been told that time is running out to conduct a comprehensive review of the NSW Liquor Act and that further delays to the five year statutory review process calls into question the Government's commitment to reducing alcohol harms in NSW.

The NSW and ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) has today released its own Draft Terms of Reference and written to the NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell to call for the immediate commencement of a transparent and consultative process.

With the clock counting down on the review of the Liquor Act which must be undertaken and tabled in Parliament by 13 December this year, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says he is concerned that the O'Farrell Government is not interested in meaningful consultation.

"It is simply unacceptable that the Government continues to sit on its hands. NAAPA has today released the Draft Terms of Reference for the review. We're now in effect, doing the job of Government in the hope that this will secure a comprehensive review of the Liquor Act and a genuine process of consultation that will give all stakeholders the opportunity to provide a considered response to the review," Mr Thorn said.

Australian Medical Association (NSW) President, Associate Professor Brian Owler says alcohol harms in NSW are significant, highlighting the latest available figure showing that in 2011-12 there were 59,950 alcohol-related hospitalisations, 14,518 alcohol-related non-domestic assaults and 10,079 alcohol-related domestic assaults.

"Alcohol is leading to preventable injuries from fights and overconsumption and putting an unnecessary burden on NSW Hospitals," Associate Professor Brian Owler said.

NAAPA's Draft Terms of Reference reiterate the main purpose of the Act, which is 'to regulate and control the sale, supply and consumption of liquor in a way that is consistent with the expectations, needs and aspirations of the community'.

With community concerns growing across the State of NSW, Michael Thorn says the current Liquor Act is failing to protect the people of NSW and that the need for open and transparent public consultation has never been greater.

NAAPA's Draft Terms of Reference calls for an open consultation process with all submissions to be made public, and the release of the Draft Review Report including Draft Recommendations.

NAAPA also recommends that the review of the Liquor Act be conducted by an independent Review Committee which includes representation from the community, public health sector, policing and medical experts and is calling for it to be chaired by an individual who is independent of Government and the alcohol industry.

Michael Thorn says it is crucial the Review Committee thoroughly examine a broad range of matters including the correlation between trading hours, outlet density and alcohol related violence and the current regulatory barriers preventing local communities from easily challenging liquor licencing applications

"The opportunity to strengthen the NSW Liquor Act to protect the people of NSW comes only once every five years. The opportunity can not be wasted and I urge the NSW Government to commence the review process immediately," Mr Thorn said.

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The NSW and ACT Alcohol Policy Coalition (NAAPA) is an alliance of health and community organisations active across NSW and the ACT that has been formed with the objective of promoting action to reduce alcohol-related harms. The Coalition of NSW and ACT organisations has been formed to lobby and campaign for alcohol policy reform to reduce alcohol-related harms across the two jurisdictions. www.naapa.org.au

