

## Media Release

### LOCAL COUNCILS CAUGHT NAPPING ON ALCOHOL CONTROL

**18 November 2014:** Victorian local government alcohol plans are weak, vague and largely non-existent.

A new study has found the majority of local governments do not have a local planning policy for licensed premises, and due to the nature of the planning policies themselves, in the case of councils that do, those policies are highly subjective and carry no statutory weight.

In 2012, the Victorian Auditor General recommended that 'The Department of Planning and Community Development should create a model local planning policy for licensed premises; and require councils to adopt a local planning policy for licensed premises where there is a particular need or concern.'

Two years on, an analysis of Victoria's 79 local governments has found that only five; Bendigo, Yarra, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Stonington, have an alcohol outlet planning policy.

Claire Wilkinson from Melbourne's Centre for Alcohol Policy Research presented her findings at the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) 2014 Conference and says the five alcohol outlet planning policies in place have a very narrow focus addressing only noise, patron safety inside venues and opening hours.

"This study found very few councils actually have an alcohol outlet planning focus policy, and the five that do, don't take into account the density of liquor licencing in their local council area or consider the alcohol harms that being experienced on their streets, suburbs and presenting in their hospitals," Ms Wilkinson said.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says the findings are disappointing because local governments have an important role in approving licensed premises and should be alert to the possible implications of the decisions they make about the availability of alcohol in their communities.

“Local governments have valuable knowledge about what is taking place on their streets, important information about the levels of harms in their neighbourhoods, and the medical and policing resources being diverted to address them, and should be harnessing that information to make informed, evidence-based decisions that safeguard their local communities from the further impact of alcohol harms,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says it should be a mandatory requirement that local governments prioritise health outcomes ahead of commercial considerations and called on the Department of Planning and Community Development to develop the model local planning policy for licensed premises as recommended by the Victorian Auditor General.

“We are now just weeks out from the State Election and voters need to be asking the question; which party is committed to taking meaningful action to reduce alcohol harms in Victoria?” Mr Thorn said.

**Ms Wilkinson and Mr Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) are available for interview.**

**Media Contact:**

<b>Michael Thorn:</b>	Jeremy Henderson	<b>0425 559 710</b>
<b>Claire Wilkinson:</b>		<b>0418 389 910</b>

---

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.

For further information visit FARE’s website: [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au).

**The Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR)** is a world-class alcohol policy research institute led by Professor Robin Room. CAPR examines alcohol-related harms and the effectiveness of alcohol-related policies and is a joint undertaking of FARE, the Victorian Department of Health, Turning Point and the University of Melbourne.

For further information visit CAPR’s website: [www.capr.edu.au](http://www.capr.edu.au).