



Media Release

MAJOR PARTIES FLUNK ALCOHOL POLICY SCORECARD

14 November 2014: The Liberal National Coalition and Labor Party have received a fail grade following an assessment of their commitment to alcohol policy measures in the lead up to the Victorian State Election, with the parties indicating full support for only one of ten proposed policy measures.

With the Coalition expressing strong anti-regulatory sentiment and the Labor Party closely guarding its unreleased *Liquor and Gaming Policy*, there are now genuine concerns that both major parties are prioritising the business interests of the liquor and gaming industries, with little regard for the potential social and health impacts of alcohol.

Earlier last month the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) wrote to the four major parties contesting the Victoria state election, and requested a response to ten alcohol policy questions.

Responses were received from all four parties, with only the Greens expressing any appetite for alcohol policy reform, supporting eight of the ten measures in full and partially supporting the remaining two.

In contrast, Labor indicated no commitment to seven of the ten measures while the Liberal National Coalition indicated no commitment to five of the ten measures.

Labor was more likely to support measures relating to health and education, while rejecting regulatory measures restricting the promotion and availability of alcohol.

The Coalition position was very similar. In its response to FARE, the Deputy Premier and National leader, Peter Ryan stated, "The Nationals do not believe a regulatory approach such as banning alcohol shopper docketts, banning bulk discounting of alcohol or further restricting alcohol advertising are effective in reducing alcohol harm."

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the Deputy Premier's complete disregard for effective regulatory measures to prevent alcohol harms flies in the face of decades of evidence.

"The Deputy Premier's response demonstrates a complete disregard for the policies that we know will lead to a reduction in harms. Three quarters of Victorians want to know how the party leaders plan to reduce alcohol harms, but disappointingly, both the Coalition and Labor have come up empty handed," Mr Thorn said.

Labor's failure to release information about its *Liquor and Gaming Policy*, despite written assurances that it would do so ahead of the election, has raised concern that the new policy may be sympathetic to the business interests of the liquor and gaming industry.

"Why is Labor being so secretive about its *Liquor and Gaming Policy* and why are our calls to the Shadow Attorney General going unanswered? The Labor Party needs to come clean to the people of Victoria about any backroom deals made with the liquor and gambling industry before voters head to the ballot box, and not after the polls close," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says a failure to seriously address one of the State's biggest preventive health challenges is an indictment on both the Coalition and Labor.

"Three Victorians die, 18 are assaulted, and 81 are hospitalised every day in this State, yet neither Labor nor the Coalition appear willing to tackle the problem. The evidence is clear. We know what we need to do to reduce alcohol harms, and a majority of Victorian voters want action in this area. Two weeks out from the election, the major parties should be committing to a strong preventive health agenda that puts the health and safety of Victorians first," Mr Thorn said.

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Mr 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.

For further information visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au.