

## **DECEIVE, DENY, DELAY - INDUSTRY LIES EXPOSED AHEAD OF GOVERNMENT ALCOHOL ROUNDTABLE**

**24 July 2018:** A newly released analysis of alcohol industry submissions to the National Alcohol Strategy (NAS) consultation has exposed the lengths the alcohol industry will go to attack, undermine and subvert the development of alcohol policy measures that would reduce harm and save lives.

Its release follows the discovery, criticism and subsequent withdrawal of a misleading and inaccurate alcohol and pregnancy health campaign, which was developed by the alcohol industry front organisation, DrinkWise, for distribution to doctors surgeries nationally.

The industry analysis by leading public health organisation, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), and the discovery of the flawed DrinkWise campaign come as the Government prepares for the National Alcohol Strategy (NAS) Roundtable on Tuesday, and highlight the risks and very real danger of giving the industry a seat at the table.

Analysis of the [17 alcohol industry submissions](#) to the NAS consultation revealed four prominent and problematic claims by industry; none of which stand up to scrutiny when examined against the evidence base.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the examination of the 17 industry submissions including those from the Australian Hotels Association, Alcohol Beverages Australia, DrinkWise, Winemakers' Federation of Australia, and Brewers Association of Australia reveal in their consistency a high level of coordination and a common willingness to deceive the public, deny the evidence and further delay the advancement of life-saving alcohol policy reform.

"Australia has been without a National Alcohol Strategy since 2011, yet the alcohol industry is causing further delay and falsely claiming that the evidence base is inadequate. This is an industry that is even prepared to lie about its own credentials with DrinkWise, the alcohol industry front organisation, falsely claiming that *"DrinkWise is not an industry body"*.

Mr Thorn says it is critical that the alcohol industry's attempts to deceive and mislead the Australian public do not go unchallenged.

"It is clear upon reading the alcohol industry submissions that the industry believes that simply committing a statement to the public record, no matter how outrageous or false, is enough to further an agenda that places profit ahead of public health and safety. But these dangerous claims cannot be allowed to stand," Mr Thorn said

Nor do the alcohol industry's claims to be a willing collaborator in implementing awareness and prevention messages stand up to scrutiny.

Mr Thorn says that by any measure the industry's voluntary labelling scheme has been an abject failure with fewer than half of all packaged alcoholic beverages available for sale displaying some type of pregnancy warning label.



“An examination of alcohol industry efforts to self-regulate, whether it be in the area of alcohol advertising or health warning labels highlights how the alcohol industry is unwilling and ultimately unable to place the interests of the Australian public ahead of its shareholders and the pursuit of profit,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn highlights the development of a current DrinkWise campaign about the risk of alcohol in pregnancy as a case in point.

FARE understands plans to distribute the campaign to GP surgeries nationally has been shelved, but only after health professionals raised concerns about the campaign collateral, including a false statement that read, *“it’s not known if alcohol is safe to drink when you are pregnant.”*

“The DrinkWise campaign is a textbook example of just how reckless and negligent the alcohol industry is prepared to be, stepping into an area ordinarily the responsibility of government, solely in an effort to stave off the threat of responsible and effective regulation.

The industry will lie, deny and mislead at every opportunity, and in this particular case, with no regard for the pregnant women and their unborn children that would be harmed as a result,” Mr Thorn said.

**Mr Thorn 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 preventive 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.