



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

GLOBAL HEALTH EFFORTS JEOPARDISED WITH BIG ALCOHOL IN THE ROOM

6 October 2017: The lack of safeguards to protect against interference by the alcohol industry threatens to undermine the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and put at risk global health.

International expert, Edinburgh University's Professor Jeff Collin says a clear conflict of interest should rule out any partnership or involvement with the alcohol industry.

The UN's 17 SDGs were produced to meet the urgent challenges facing the world and designed to be interlocking with success in one area expected to lead to success in another.

The goals include a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation, including potentially damaging commitments to further trade liberalisation and, crucially, to extensive partnerships with the private sector. In the context of alcohol this could be seriously damaging to global health and sustainable development.

"The commitment to partnerships with the commercial sector could open the door to the alcohol industry and deliver it a seat at the table. The truth of course is the alcohol industry has no place being anywhere near the room. Its presence threatens to seriously undermine and compromise efforts to achieve the SDGs, including the key Goal 3 target to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol," Professor Collin said.

Professor Collin says that taking seriously conflict of interest with unhealthy commodity producers is critical to global health and sustainable development. This is recognised in tobacco, and increasingly in nutrition, but crucially not yet in alcohol.

"There are very clear rules on protecting health policy from tobacco industry interference, and the WHO is developing strong guidance on conflict of interest in nutrition policy, but there is nothing remotely equivalent for alcohol policy. This vacuum is fully exploited by the alcohol industry to undermine the development of effective policies. This is a major problem, very simply because the alcohol industry's commercial interests do not, and will never align with health objectives at community, national or international levels" Professor Collin said.

GAPC Conference Keynote Speaker, Professor Rob Moodie AM, Professor of Public Health, University of Melbourne will also explore the manner in which the alcohol industry continues to threaten public health policy and programs in countries across the world.

"Attacking the science and the scientists, merchandising doubt and influencing the political agenda to protect its bottom line, the alcohol industry is relentless in its efforts to undermine proven public health initiatives that would ultimately save lives," Professor Moodie said.



Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says the alcohol industry's dirty tactics are equally a problem in Australia.

"It's a global problem, but very much an issue in Australia as well, where we see examples almost every other week of an alcohol industry so desperate to resist government regulation, that it is prepared to dispute research that is indisputable, spread doubt when the evidence is clear, and manufacture false debate," Mr Thorn said.

Professor Collin, Professor Moodie and Mr Thorn are available for interview

Media contact:

Jeremy Henderson 0425 559 710

<https://www.gapc2017.org.au/>

Media Notes:

GAPC 2017 Conference

WHAT: From 4-6 October 2017, world-leading alcohol policy makers, researchers and practitioners will arrive in Melbourne for the Global Alcohol Policy Conference (GAPC) 2017.

The first of its kind to be held in Australia, GAPC 2017 will build on earlier conferences' translation of evidence into action, and contribute to the increasing momentum around the world to stop harm caused by alcohol.

GAPC is co-hosted by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA) and Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA). The 2017 conference theme is *Mobilising for Change – Alcohol policy and the evidence for action*.

GAPC 2017 will maintain the tradition of focusing on advocacy, overcoming vested interests in alcohol policy development, and the need for international collaboration.

Each day of the GAPC 2017 will be distinct. Through eight plenary sessions, workshops and presentations, a diverse range of national and international experts will provide opportunities for discussion about their research and experience and how these can be applied to alcohol policy environments and reinvigorate efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm worldwide.

WHO: **A range of international and national speakers will be available for interview**

Please see program for more details.



WHEN: 8:30am to 5:00pm, Wednesday – Friday 4-6 October 2017 ([see full event program here](#)).
Advance embargoed copies of GAPC media releases are available on request.

WHERE: Pullman Melbourne Albert Park, 65 Queens Road, Albert Park, Melbourne.

Media can collect passes from the conference registration desk onsite and can pre-register via email to events@phaa.net.au.

CONTACT: Jeremy Henderson 0425 559 710

The **Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA)** is a network of non-governmental organisations and people working in public health agencies who share information on alcohol issues and advocate evidence-based alcohol policies, “free from commercial interests.”

Resource centres affiliated to GAPA operate in Africa, European Union, South America, South East Asia, USA and Western Pacific regions. <http://globalgapa.org/>

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. <http://fare.org.au/>

The **Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA)** provides forums for the discussion of public health in Australia and a voice of a wide variety of professional public health workers.

Via the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health (ANZJPH), PHAA provides Australia’s basic public health infrastructure that links those undertaking research in public health and those undertaking policy and program development and implementation. <https://www.phaa.net.au/>

The **National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA)** is a national coalition of health and community organisations from across Australia that has been formed with the goal of reducing alcohol-related harm.

Currently comprising major organisations with an interest in alcohol and public health, the formation of the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol represents the first time such a broad-based alliance has come together to pool their collective expertise around what needs to be done to address Australia’s drinking problems. <http://actiononalcohol.org.au/>