



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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**For immediate release**

# **MOMENTUM BUILDS FOR ALCOHOL PRICE REFORMS TO TACKLE THE HARM CAUSED BY CHEAP BOOZE**

**3 October 2017:** A highly targeted nation-wide minimum price on alcohol could deliver a dramatic reduction in alcohol harm, save lives and reduce alcohol consumption among the heaviest drinkers.

The evidence and international experience of minimum pricing as an effective measure to prevent and reduce the harmful use of alcohol and alcohol related-harm continues to gather momentum globally and within Australia.

Government support of a minimum pricing system for the sale of alcohol has been evidenced in Canada, the United States, Scotland, Ireland, several countries in Eastern Europe, and other Governments across the United Kingdom (UK) are currently considering price reform.

In the UK, Health campaigners remain hopeful that in coming days the Supreme Court gives the greenlight for the implementation of Scotland's Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) plan.

Here in Australia, the Northern Territory Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review is considering a proposal for the introduction of a MUP on alcohol, while in Western Australia (WA), it was revealed in September that a minimum floor price on takeaway alcohol is being considered by WA Health Minister Roger Cook.

In the face of sustained opposition by global and national alcohol producers, top national and international alcohol harm experts meeting today at the Global Alcohol Policy Conference (GAPC) will deliver a compelling case for progressive alcohol price reform that focuses on increasing alcohol price and reducing availability and marketing.

Alcohol harm in Australia is a significant problem, and its toxicity continues to poison communities both physically and socially. Each year, more than 5,500 lives lost and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised as a result of alcohol.

Alcohol is not only one of our nation's greatest preventive health challenges, but is increasingly being recognised as an obstacle to sustainable human development globally.

A minimum price per standard drink would impact the heaviest drinkers, binge drinkers and pre-loaders who are most likely to consume cheap alcohol and see a decline in alcohol attributable hospitalisations and deaths. The measure would have limited impact on moderate drinkers.

Katherine Brown, Chief Executive of the Institute of Alcohol Studies (UK) will Chair a GAPC Pre-Conference Symposium on tackling cheap alcohol today.

Ms Brown says that it is well documented that cheap alcohol products are favoured by the heaviest drinkers, and that lower prices increase heavy drinking.

“Cheap alcohol destroys lives and it is often the poorest and most vulnerable that suffer the most. All the evidence shows that raising the price of the cheapest drink is the most powerful tool at the disposal of governments to curb alcohol harm,” Ms Brown said.

Ms Brown says minimum pricing would make a significant impact on health inequalities with 80% of lives saved coming from the most deprived groups in society.

“This policy must be considered by governments that are serious about saving lives and protecting the vulnerable.” Ms Brown said.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn said introducing a minimum price would be one of the single most effective ways of alleviating the harms associated with alcohol consumption and even if hazardous and harmful drinkers are less responsive to price increases than other drinkers, the research evidence indicates that their alcohol consumption would still decline.

“The relationship between alcohol price, harms and consumption is clear: price changes lead to changes in consumption habits amongst the heaviest drinkers. Governments need to boldly accept the fact that alcohol abuse is driven by cheap booze that is readily available and persistently promoted,” Mr Thorn said.

#### **Ms Brown and Mr Thorn are available for interview**

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

[Pre-Event Symposium – Tackling cheap alcohol](#)

#### **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](mailto:events@phaa.net.au).**

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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/>