



STOPPING
HARM
CAUSED BY
ALCOHOL



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW REPORT OFFERS SOLUTIONS TO GOVERNMENT AT RISK OF ALCOHOL DEPENDENCY

30 May 2017: Health experts have today warned the McGowan Government that its planned liquor reforms risk increasing alcohol's availability, exposing communities to even greater levels of alcohol harm, and jeopardising the state's reputation as Australia's leading public health jurisdiction.

The warning comes ahead of the launch of *Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere?*, a new report which compares and assesses the policies that regulate the physical availability of alcohol in Australia and the United Kingdom.

Produced by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and the London-based Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) the report assesses the relative merits of different availability policies applied in the two countries.

While in Australia, the focus to date has been on temporal policies, regulating the trading hours of on and off-licence venues; the United Kingdom has placed greater emphasis and investment in spatial policies addressing the cumulative impact of alcohol outlets.

The report highlights the strengths of alcohol policy measures across the two countries, but most importantly, highlights the wealth of effective and proven policy measures available to governments to stop alcohol harm.

Report co-author, FARE's Director of Policy and Research, Amy Ferguson says evidence-based controls must be prioritised and embraced if governments are to demonstrate they are sincere in their desire to keep communities healthy and safe.

"Too often in Australia, governments ignore the policy solutions right in front of them. *Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere?* is a new report which compares and assesses the successful policies that regulate the physical availability of alcohol in Australia and the United Kingdom. What is clear is that addressing the availability of alcohol, whether that be through modest reductions in trading hours, or outlet density, is the key to reducing the significant harm from alcohol," Ms Ferguson said.

Alcohol harm in Western Australia is especially significant, with ten deaths, 298 hospitalisations and 98 domestic assaults every week.

Ambulance call outs for intoxication have increased by 26% between 2012 (3,903) and 2015 (4,903), while alcohol-related emergency department presentations in metropolitan areas increased by 37% between 2007 (5,996) and 2011 (8,249).



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Spokesperson for the WA Alcohol and Youth Action Coalition, Julia Stafford says the continuing high level of alcohol harm can only be meaningfully addressed if governments are willing to prioritise public health ahead of industry profits.

“Alcohol harm in Western Australia is significant and only getting worse. This places a major burden on ambulance services, police and emergency departments. The Government’s response to this rising tide of harm must be to strengthen liquor licencing regulation with the clear intent to reduce the alcohol harm burden currently being experienced by the State,” Ms Stafford said.

The McGowan Government recently announced that tourism bodies would be given equal weight as the Police Commissioner and the Executive Director of Public Health when considering liquor licence applications.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn is increasingly concerned by government rhetoric that talks of cutting red tape and making liquor licences more easily obtainable.

“Premier Mark McGowan seems to believe that the key to Western Australia’s health and prosperity is more licenced venues. He is sorely mistaken. Recent government announcements are a threat to the State’s national public health leadership and shows worrying signs of the influence of the alcohol industry,” Mr Thorn said.

The report, *Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere?*, is also being launched in London later today.

IAS Director, Katherine Brown says the last drink laws introduced in New South Wales and Queensland were one of the three highest ranked policy measures based on their effectiveness in reducing harm and value for money.

“There is no doubt that here in the UK, we would benefit greatly from similar laws that allowed local government to set earlier closing times. The Australian evidence shows this would help cut alcohol related violence and disorder in busy towns and city centres, easing the burden on our over-stretched health and emergency services” Ms Brown said.

Julia Stafford, Michael Thorn and Amy Ferguson are 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.

The **WA Alcohol and Youth Action Coalition** is an alliance of health and community organisations active across WA that has been formed with the objective of promoting action to reduce harm from alcohol among young people.

The **WA Coalition** is co-chaired by Professor Fiona Stanley AC, Founding Director and Patron of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and Professor Mike Daube AO, Director of the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth. The WA Coalition is supported by 70 organisations from a broad range of areas. This is the first time in WA that such a broad range of organisations have joined forces on what needs to be done to reduce harm from alcohol among young people.