



DENIGRATE, DECEIVE AND DISCREDIT: WOOLWORTHS CALLED OUT OVER BIG BOX BULLY TACTICS

5 April 2017: Leading public health experts have slammed Woolworths over its decision to take legal action against the Northern Territory Government in an effort to establish a Dan Murphy's big box liquor outlet in Darwin.

In a letter to Woolworths Chairman Mr Gordon Cairns, made public today, the supermarket giant was taken to task over recent public comments by Dan Murphy's Head of Corporate Services Shane Tremble who falsely claimed there 'is no such evidence' showing that the size of a liquor outlet is related to alcohol harm.

Labelling the claims disingenuous and dangerous in a jurisdiction that already has one of the highest ratios of liquor outlets per population in Australia; the letter demands Woolworths publicly refute Mr Tremble's efforts to deceive the people of the Northern Territory.

Signatories to the letter include the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA), the People's Alcohol Action Coalition and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory.

This is not the first occasion on which Woolworths has attempted to denigrate scientists' independent peer-reviewed research and aggressively challenge community objections, with the letter citing Woolworths application to establish a Dan Murphy's in the City of Casey (Victoria) and its submission to the former New South Wales Casino Liquor and Gaming Control Authority, as recent high profile examples.

Woolworths is also guilty of intimidating and cajoling public servants, with documents obtained from the NSW Office Liquor Gaming and Racing (OLGR) in 2013 revealing that the then Director of Media and Communications observed that Woolworths appeared to be trying to "intimidate and disrupt OLGR's regulatory intervention and interfere".

With funding from the Commonwealth Government's Australian Research Council, Deakin University's Professor Peter Miller has studied the corporate political activity and behavior of tobacco, alcohol and gambling companies in Australia and the manner in which those industries oppose public health interventions and pressure governments.

He will present his findings at the 15th World Congress on Public Health in Melbourne today, and says the corporate behavior of Woolworths should come as no surprise to anyone.

"Woolworths is the biggest purveyor of addictive products in Australia – the market leader in the big three – tobacco, alcohol and poker machines. When we examine this type of behavior, we see profit being put ahead of public health and wellbeing, by international corporations bent on serving their global shareholders," Professor Miller said.



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Professor Miller says these types of tactics are straight out of the tobacco industry playbook and are being consistently applied to gambling and alcohol.

“We see the same tactics from alcohol, gambling and tobacco industry players time and time again. Similar attempts to cast doubt over the science, to intimidate, the threats of legal action, employing ex-politicians and their staff, court challenges, the lobbying and the buying of influence through political donations,” Professor Miller said.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn urges Woolworths to terminate its legal challenge in the Northern Territory and says Woolworths does not need another store in Darwin.

“In light of the long recognised and unacceptable levels of alcohol harm in the NT, the high ratio of existing venues, and the relationship between large packaged liquor outlets and alcohol harm, we implore Woolworths to discontinue its efforts to open a Dan Murphy’s in Darwin and immediately end its legal action against the Northern Territory Government,” Mr Thorn said

Professor Miller and Mr Thorn are available for interview.

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15th World Congress on Public Health (WCPH2017) <http://www.wcph2017.com/>

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.