



ACT TAXPAYERS PAYING \$11M TAB FOR ALCOHOL HARM

16 November 2016: New research has confirmed Canberrans have a major problem with alcohol, with alcohol-related crime in the nation's capital estimated to cost taxpayers \$11.7 million.

Reports of high levels of aggression, sexual harassment, injury, high levels of intoxication, and pre-drinking have prompted calls for the re-elected Barr Government to act on the policy proposals from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Liquor Act review white paper.

The new Drug and Alcohol intoxication and Subsequent Harm in night-time Entertainment Districts (DASHED) report from Deakin University examines alcohol-related problems in Canberra and Hobart.

The investigation included interviews with more than 1,600 patrons in entertainment precincts, coupled with researcher observations of licensed venues and data from local police, ambulance services, emergency departments, and licensing bodies.

Researchers found almost half (47 per cent) of the patrons interviewed had experienced negative encounters in and around licensed venues in Civic and Braddon – including being involved in verbal aggression (30 per cent), physical aggression (17 per cent), or receiving unwanted sexual attention (28 per cent).

The rate of alcohol-related injury seen in Canberra (13 per cent) was among the highest of all sites where this data has been collected, including in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Geelong and Wollongong.

Alcohol-related hospitalisations in the ACT are also on the rise, with the rate of high alcohol hours (HAH) emergency department presentations increasing from 61.5 per 10,000 people in 2010 to 70 per 10,000 in 2014.

Economic impact analysis found alcohol's cost burden is greater in the early hours of the morning, with 46 per cent of short-term reactive policing costs and 43 per cent of alcohol-related offences occurring between 2am and 6am.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive Michael Thorn says there is strong evidence that a modest reduction in trading hours will prevent many of these harms.

"This report provides further evidence that late night trading is associated with increased risk of harm in the community. Alcohol places a huge burden on local hospitals and emergency workers and the broader community. In the ACT each month, six people die and a further 189 are hospitalised as a result of alcohol. The newly formed ACT Government should address these harms and make our community safer by introducing modest reductions to the trading hours of pubs, clubs, and bars," said Mr Thorn.



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Mr Thorn says this harm comes at considerable cost to the community, both in terms of the physical, psychological and emotional harms of violence and injury, but also in terms of the substantial economic cost and burden on emergency services.

“Much of this cost is entirely preventable. With the government yet to finalise its review of the Liquor Act, it is vital the extent of alcohol harm in Canberra is acknowledged and that steps are taken to address it and make our communities, our streets and our homes safer,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Michael 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. 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.