



MEDIA RELEASE

MINIMUM UNIT ALCOHOL PRICE TO DELIVER NT DRAMATIC REDUCTION IN ALCOHOL HARM

1 August 2017: The Northern Territory (NT) Government should introduce a floor price on alcohol; a profound intervention that would reduce harm and save lives.

Establishing a minimum unit price of \$1.50 per standard drink would not only target cheap alcohol products, but also result in a dramatic reduction in alcohol attributable hospitalisations and deaths.

Public health experts met with Health Minister Natasha Fyles on Monday to discuss the plan and to argue strongly for its introduction.

A highly targeted intervention, a floor price would reduce consumption among the heaviest drinkers while limiting any impact on those drinking at moderate levels.

And with a limited impact on alcohol products already priced above the \$1.50 per standard drink threshold, the policy is likely to be supported by retailers, on-license venues and producers of mid-range and premium products.

A new research paper, *The price is right: Setting a floor price for alcohol in the Northern Territory*, published by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) builds a compelling case for alcohol pricing reform.

In the NT, alcohol is now almost twice as affordable as it was 20 years ago, with the Territory also recording dangerous per capita levels of alcohol consumption placing it among the top ten drinking nations in the world.

The results of the [National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program](#) published in March this year highlighted that in the Northern Territory, alcohol consumption in both capital city and regional locations is almost three times the national average.

In turn, the Territory pays a high toll with the number of alcohol attributable deaths, approximately three times the national average and with alcohol involved in more than half of all assaults.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says that the Gunner Government now has a rare opportunity to confront the impact alcohol has on all Territorians.

“The evidence from other parts of the world where governments have introduced an alcohol floor price is clear. This measure is a proven, effective and powerful intervention that will significantly reduce harm and save lives,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says an alcohol floor price would finally arm the Northern Territory with a strong shield against cheap booze, with the Commonwealth Government steadfastly refusing to take the steps necessary to reform a broken tax system that encourages the production of cheap wine.



Foundation for Alcohol
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“In the absence of Commonwealth leadership to address once and for all a flawed alcohol tax regime that encourages the production and supply of cheap wine, the introduction of an alcohol floor price would finally provide a way for the Territory to stop the harm from cheap alcohol,” Mr Thorn said.

Donna Ah Chee, Chair of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) says an alcohol floor price would deliver benefits across the Territory.

“Not only will an alcohol floor price reduce crime, hospitalisations, and hospital emergency department presentations, but will also cut rates of family and domestic violence, increase the safety of women and children, reduce child neglect and improve the wellbeing of all Territorians,” Ms Ah Chee said.

Of note, and based on current pricing, the introduction of a \$1.50 per standard drink floor price would not necessitate a price increase to be applied to a carton of beer.

Mr Thorn says an alcohol floor price is a win for moderate and heavy drinkers alike.

“An alcohol floor price really benefits all Territorians, by lowering rates of acute harm among heavy drinkers, by reducing the burden of chronic disease, and all without imposing a burden on moderate drinkers,” Mr Thorn said.

The paper, *The price is right: Setting a floor price for alcohol in the Northern Territory* has been submitted to the NT Government’s *Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review* chaired by Trevor Riley, and is currently being reviewed.

Mr Thorn and Ms Ah Chee 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. To find out more visit www.fare.org.au.