



Media Release

NEW BOOK A BLUEPRINT TO FIX STATE'S BROKEN LIQUOR LICENSING SYSTEM

19 August 2014: With more liquor licences than any other state or territory in Australia, a regulatory framework loudly condemned for its failure to prevent or reduce alcohol harms and a State election just two months away, the editors of a new publication launching today in Melbourne say the book provides the Government and the opposition with a blueprint to fix Victoria's broken licensing system.

The book, *Stemming the tide of alcohol: Liquor licensing and the public interest* provides policy makers, public health advocates, researchers, community groups and members of the general public with comprehensive information about the regulation of Australian alcohol markets and the tools and interventions that have the potential to reduce alcohol harm.

The publication features an Australia-wide range of contributors, including a chapter that brings Victoria's failings on alcohol policy into sharp relief, written by Victoria Auditor General, John Doyle which summarises the 2012 report, *Effectiveness of justice strategies in preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm*.

Co-editor and contributor, Michael Thorn, Chief Executive of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) says the lack of meaningful action in Victoria to address any of the concerns raised by the report in the two years since its publication is incredibly disappointing.

"The Auditor General's report was both depressing and illuminating. Depressing because it highlighted how the liquor licensing system in Victoria has failed to protect Victorians from harm, but illuminating because it stated clearly what needed to be done to address those failings. Two years down the track it is extremely disappointing to see how little progress has been made by the Victoria Government to address the Auditor General's concerns," Mr Thorn said.

Introducing the book, Professor Rob Moodie, former chair of the National Preventative Health Task Force and Professor of Public Health at the University of Melbourne says that for too long in Australia, the granting, owning and management of alcohol licences have not been taken seriously enough.

"Given that alcohol is no ordinary commodity and is a social drug that can cause great harm if inappropriately promoted, served or consumed, holding an alcohol licence should imply an obligation of a duty of care," Professor Moodie said.

Today, Victoria has more liquor licences than any other State or Territory, over 20,000 at last count, up from 19,000 at the time the Auditor General released his report.

Only two months out from a State election Mr Thorn says Victorians continue to pay a heavy toll as a result of the Government's refusal to adopt the Auditor General's recommendations, and calls on all political parties to step forward and indicate what they will do to address alcohol-related harms in Victoria.

"Victorians deserve real action on alcohol. Further delays will result in more deaths, more harm and more broken lives. While the recent government announcement on the collection of sales data was welcome, it's not nearly enough. The liquor licensing system in Victoria is broken, and heading into the State election, all parties must declare what they intend to do to fix the problem," Mr Thorn said.

BOOK LAUNCH

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education and The University of Melbourne invite you to the Launch of *Stemming the tide of alcohol: Liquor licensing and the public interest*

Date: 19 August 2014

Time: 11am – 12pm

Venue: Seminar Room 515, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, Level 5, 207 Bouverie Street, Carlton VIC 3053.

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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 preventative 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.

For further information visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au.