



Media Release

## NSW HEALTH ALLIANCE SAYS LIQUOR LICENSEES MUST PAY

**18 September 2013:** NSW Licenced venues would be required to pay annual licence fees upwards of \$25,000 under sweeping changes proposed by the State's leading alcohol policy coalition.

The NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) says the introduction of a fairer licencing regime would make the State's 17,010 liquor licensees more accountable for the alcohol harms they cause and help reign in escalating alcohol harms.

Under the proposed risk based licencing (RBL) system; licenced venues would pay considerably greater licensing costs. Using the Australian Capital Territory RBL system as a guide, the Ivy, which up until now has only paid a one-off \$5,000 application fee, would, in addition, pay \$25,184 per year; the Penrith Panthers Leagues Club would pay \$16,790 and the Coojee Bay Hotel, \$20,387.

The recent Auditor General's report exposed the annual \$1.029 billion cost of alcohol abuse to Government, but failed to highlight the embarrassing and insignificant \$1.090 million in revenue collected from licensees, who currently pay no annual licensing fees.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says the Government can start reshaping a flawed Liquor Act by introducing some rigour and sensible regulation.

"Liquor licenses should never have been granted in perpetuity. A liquor license is a privilege and not a right. The paltry one-off application fee that licensees are currently paying is not enough. An annual fee would return both equity and accountability to a system severely lacking in both," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says the people of NSW are today paying too high a price for weak and ineffective liquor legislation and says harm minimisation must be elevated as the primary focus of the NSW Liquor Act.

"The Liquor Act as it currently stands is a failure. It has failed to protect the people of NSW from harm, and it has failed to protect the State from the enormous financial burden of alcohol abuse. Previous efforts to weaken the legislation, to shift its primary focus from health protection to industry pandering are now seen for what they were; an ill-conceived and colossal error on the part of Government," Mr Thorn said.

NAAPA's comprehensive submission to the statutory review of the *NSW Liquor ACT 2007* and *The Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007* includes a total of 20 recommendations.

Among them, NAAPA also recommends that 24 hour trading be abolished, local communities be given a greater say in the licensing decisions that directly impact them and that liquor licensing responsibility be removed from the Department of Trade and Investment, arguing that licensing should not sit in an area that focusses in such a narrow, industry-dominated area.

Mr Scott Weber, President of the NSW Police Association says licensing authorities should be relocated within an independent office that better connects with policing, family and community services, health, justice, land planning and local government.

“The regulation of liquor licensing needs to be independent of vested industry interests. Under the Department of Trade and Investment’s accommodating watch, industry has been given the complete freedom to write its own rules with disastrous consequences. That can’t be allowed to continue if NSW wants to reduce its heavy alcohol toll,” Mr Weber said.

In 2011-12 there were 59,950 alcohol-related hospitalisations, 14,518 alcohol-related non-domestic assaults, and 10,079 alcohol-related domestic assaults in NSW.

Australian Medical Association NSW President, Associate Professor Brian Owler says the NSW Government must now commit to the introduction of evidence-based measures, before alcohol harms spiral further out of control.

“Every day we see firsthand in our hospital wards the impact that alcohol has on the community. This review is an opportunity for the Government to show some leadership on this issue and demonstrate they are serious about reducing alcohol-related harms in NSW,” Associate Professor Owler said.

### **Media Contacts**

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The NSW and ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) is an alliance of health and community organisations active across NSW and the ACT that has been formed with the objective of promoting action to reduce alcohol-related harms. The Coalition of NSW and ACT organisations has been formed to lobby and campaign for alcohol policy reform to reduce alcohol-related harms across the two jurisdictions. [www.naapa.org.au](http://www.naapa.org.au)



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