



## NATIONAL DV SUMMIT BLIND TO ALCOHOL HARM

**27 October 2016:** Domestic violence and alcohol experts, doctors, Indigenous leaders, and leading researchers say that failing to address the role of alcohol at this week's Council of Australian Governments (COAG) summit on family violence will be a missed opportunity that risks the safety of families across Australia.

The signatories to a Statement of Concern released today, among them the Royal Australian College of Surgeons, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, and Telethon Kids Institute, have warned that until governments give thoughtful consideration to the factors such as alcohol that contribute to family and domestic violence, the prevention discourse will remain incomplete.

The two-day COAG National Summit on reducing violence against women and their children is being held in Brisbane, with delegates participating in a series of eight roundtable discussions of key issues, none of which directly address alcohol harm.

Yet, alcohol is a significant risk factor for family violence, responsible for up to 65 per cent of domestic incidents reported to police and up to 47 per cent of all child abuse cases reported in Australia. It significantly increases the severity of injuries.

More than a third of intimate partner homicides involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, more than a million Australian children are affected by others' drinking, and 10,000 are in the child protection system as a result of their carers' drinking.

Professor Angela Taft, Director at the Judith Lumley Centre at La Trobe University, congratulated governments for their continued focus on the need to address family violence, but says there is an urgent need for political leaders to expand the scope of consideration.

"Alcohol is never an excuse for violence, but we cannot ignore its role. Despite decades of research demonstrating that alcohol contributes to the incidence and severity of family and domestic violence, doing something about it is a neglected space. It is now time that we acknowledge these known risk factors, such as alcohol, and embrace the solutions available to us," Professor Taft said.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive Michael Thorn says interventions that address alcohol can be introduced swiftly and inexpensively, and would save lives.

"Solutions to reduce alcohol harm throughout the country can be enacted quickly and cheaply, and could result in immediate reductions in family violence. We can start by reforming the alcohol taxation system, reducing the availability of alcohol, and removing the sexualisation of women in alcohol advertisements. If we embrace these changes today, more women and children will sleep safely tonight," Mr Thorn said.



Foundation for Alcohol  
Research & Education

General Practitioner and public health medical officer at the Central Australian Aboriginal Health Congress Dr John Boffa says that these policy interventions have the full support by frontline services and health professionals who have long been advocating for preventive action.

“We know what works, and armed with that evidence we now need the political will to introduce evidence-based measures that look beyond headlines and election cycles and will be effective in saving lives and reducing the damage wrought by alcohol behind closed doors,” said Dr Boffa.

**Professor Taft, Dr Boffa, and Mr Thorn 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.

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.