



## MEDIA RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

## ORIGIN FAIL: BLUES BOOZE BLOWS

**23 May 2016:** A State of Origin Blues promotion offering free beer has been slammed by former New South Wales (NSW) Origin player, Steve Ella, who is dismayed about the saturation of alcohol advertising in sport.

Ella, who represented the State in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 says he is dismayed that the Blues are complicit in the promotion of a product responsible for so much harm in NSW.

On Saturday, *The Daily Telegraph* in partnership with Carlton United Breweries, Woolworths (BWS) and the National Rugby League (NRL) offered its readers a free limited edition Victoria Bitter (VB) Blues can.

In a letter of complaint to NRL Chief Executive Todd Greenberg, Ella, who has worked in the alcohol and other drug sector for 19 years in NSW, says he is concerned about the impact the promotion will have on impressionable young people and sport fans of all ages.

“Since my time proudly representing NSW in the State of Origin series I have watched as the Blues have become increasingly saturated with alcohol sponsorship. Every day in NSW alcohol is responsible for four deaths, 32 emergency department presentations, and 149 hospitalisations, and we know for a fact that the prolific promotion of alcohol only further contributes to harm in our communities,” Mr Ella said.

Chief Executive of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Michael Thorn, says that this action demonstrates that the NRL is out of touch with the community.

“The Blues Booze promotion further blurs the line between sport and alcohol marketing. The State of Origin is enjoyed by families and young people and by offering promotions such as this, the NRL is saying that it cares about its relationship with big corporates ahead of its responsibility to fans. It is no wonder that 60 per cent of Australians want alcohol sponsorship removed from sports altogether when they see this behaviour by the NRL, who is out of touch with community sentiment,” says Mr Thorn.

FARE, of which Steve Ella is a Director, lodged a formal complaint against the free VB NSW Blues can promotion with the Director General of the NSW Department of Justice, Andrew Cappie-Wood on Friday 19 May, stating the promotion breaches three separate sections of the NSW Liquor Act 2007.

FARE says the release of limited-edition blue VB cans based on the NSW Blues team jersey are likely to have special appeal to minors, particularly young Blues’ supporters and, as such, breaches section 102(2)(a) of the Act.

Secondly, in allowing for the provision of up to 260,000 cans of free beer, the promotion also breaches section 102(2)(d) of the Act.



Foundation for Alcohol  
Research & Education

Lastly, by promoting alcohol in relation to a high-profile family sporting event and in a newspaper read by families across NSW, the promotion also breaches section 102(2)(f) of the Act which states promotions can be prohibited if found to be 'otherwise in the public interest'.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn has called on the NSW Department of Justice to act to ensure an end to any further reckless alcohol promotions.

"We know that exposure to alcohol advertising is associated with young people starting to drink earlier in life and encourages those already drinking to consume even more. The NSW Department of Justice must do all it can to exercise its authority to prevent these types of promotions and I call on the NRL to rethink its association with alcohol," Mr Thorn said.

**Steve Ella and Michael 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. 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. For more information visit [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au)