

Media Release

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OUT-DATED WA LIQUOR ACT FAILING TO PROTECT AGAINST HARMS

27 March 2013: Australia's leading alcohol research and education body says Western Australia's antiquated Liquor Control Act is failing to prevent alcohol-related harms.

Critical of legislation that has gone largely unchanged for ten years, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) has also slammed the narrow and selective focus of the current government review, which it says fails to adequately address questions of availability and price.

With a total of 26 recommendations, FARE's comprehensive submission to the Review of the *Liquor Control Act 1988*, identifies the need to elevate and prioritise harm minimisation above all else.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says alcohol-related harms in West Australia are substantial, increasing, and can no longer be ignored.

"Over the last decade, the Liquor Act has remained largely unchanged, while over that same time, alcohol-related harms have become steadily worse. When you have over 43 per cent of all West Australians aged 14 and over consuming alcohol at levels that place them at risk of an alcohol related injury, you clearly have legislation that is failing the people of West Australia," Mr Thorn said.

Michael Thorn says across Australia, alcohol is more affordable than it has been in three decades, and more available and more heavily promoted than ever before, and says a Liquor Control Act that fails to tackle price, availability and promotion is doomed to fail.

"In reviewing the Liquor Control Act, the Government's primary objective must be to reduce alcohol harms. What's required now, is not tinkering around the edges, but bold policy reform that addresses price, availability and promotion, based on the best evidence available," Mr Thorn said.

Among its 26 recommendations FARE calls on the Government to amend the Liquor Control Act to legislate for a minimum floor price for alcohol sold at both on and off-licence premises so as to stop reckless discounting.

FARE has also called on the Government to strengthen its efforts to better regulate point-of-sale promotions, calling for greater clarity and clearer penalties for licenced premises in breach of promotions guidelines on pricing, as well as new provisions that would minimise young people's exposure to alcohol promotions and promotional material in public spaces.

In addition, FARE has called for a reduction in trading hours for those outlets currently trading past 3am, a risk-based licencing fee structure based on a venues propensity to cause alcohol harms, and the introduction and enforcement of saturation zones in areas identified as having large number of existing liquor licences.

FARE is critical of the Department of Liquor, Gaming and Racing's decision not to make submissions public, and will consider seeking access to submissions under the Freedom of Information Act.

"It's frankly disappointing and puzzling that the Government would choose to not make the submissions public. This is an important issue that impacts on the lives of all the people of Western Australia. In the interests of transparency and good governance, I urge the government to reconsider and make all submissions public," Mr Thorn said.

FARE's submission is publically available on-line:

<http://www.fare.org.au/policy-advocacy/submissions/>

Michael Thorn is available for interview.

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Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is an independent, charitable organisation working to prevent the harmful use of alcohol in Australia. Since 2001, FARE has invested over \$115 million in research and community projects to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse on Australians. Through its national grants program and commissioned research, FARE has established itself as a leading voice on alcohol and other drugs issues. FARE works with community groups, all levels of government, police, emergency workers, research institutions and the private sector to address alcohol-related problems. For further information visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au