



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Media Release

RED TAPE REVIEW REJECTED, GOVERNMENT PLAN DANGEROUS AND ILL-CONSIDERED

6 May 2013: The nation's leading alcohol research and education body has registered strong opposition to legislation that would destroy measures currently in place to protect the people of Queensland from alcohol harms.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) says the bill should be rejected outright because the proposed changes take Queensland alcohol control backwards, muzzles the general public, and only serves to undermine public health and safety.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says the so called red tape reduction review is an ill-considered and dangerous move to deregulate alcohol controls at the very time when the Government should be doing the opposite and strengthening them.

"This proposed amendment bill makes as much sense as decommissioning the State's fire engines during bush fire season. This legislation is flawed and dangerous. Today in Queensland and across Australia alcohol harms are on the rise. In Queensland alone, there are estimated 4000 hospital emergency department presentations per year due to alcohol-related injury. Alcohol harms will only rise further if this legislation was to pass in its current form," Mr Thorn said.

In its submission to the *Queensland Legislative Assembly Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee*, FARE rejected all of the alcohol related components of the proposed legislation and recommended that the Queensland Parliament abandon the *Liquor and Gaming (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013*.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn, says a proposed amendment that would make alcohol more available in schools, thereby exposing children and young people, the most vulnerable in the community, to potential alcohol harms is of particular concern.

"It is a sad day when a government's priority is to make alcohol more available in situations where kids and young people are present such as schools and surf clubs. When the public's attention is strongly focused on addressing young people's access to alcohol and risky drinking we should not be doing things that reinforce the ubiquity of alcohol," Mr Thorn said.

Almost one quarter of Queenslanders aged 14 and over (23.2%) consume alcohol at a rate that puts them in risk of lifetime harms, and almost half of Queenslanders aged 14 and over (44.9%) consume alcohol at levels that place them in risk of an alcohol related injury from a single occasion of drinking. On both counts Queensland is second only to the Northern Territory.

In 2010, the Queensland Legislative Assembly conducted a comprehensive *Inquiry into Alcohol Related Violence* and made recommendations to reduce alcohol-related violence including amending the *Liquor Act 1992* to provide for greater community consultation.

Three years on, the current Bill threatens to muzzle the community and ignore its concerns, through the exemption of particular licences from preparing community impact statements and by removing the requirement to advertise new liquor licence applications in local newspapers.

Community consultation has been further undermined by the proposal to exempt restaurants and cafes from the need to submit a Risk Assessment Management Plan (RAMP) whereby applicants would be required to specify procedures for community consultation in addition to detailed arrangements for security, training and Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA).

Mr Thorn says it is fair to ask why the now Queensland Attorney General, Mr Jarrod Bleijie, who served on the *Inquiry into Alcohol Related Violence*, is now so eager to silence community concerns.

“The Queensland Government is attempting to undermine the Liquor Act under the guise of removing red tape, but the reality is we are not talking about removing unnecessary or redundant rules and regulations. We are talking about essential and critical legislation. Legislation designed with the express purpose of minimising harm from alcohol use and misuse; legislation designed to save lives and minimise the adverse effects on our health and safety,” Mr Thorn said.

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