



## Media Release

### For Immediate Release

# ALCOHOL INDUSTRY SPENDS BIG TO BUY POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN VICTORIA

**27 November 2014:** Victorian political parties have received more than \$900,000 in political donations from the alcohol industry over the last three years, prompting concerns that the industry is exerting undue influence in order to prevent politicians from prioritising alcohol harm reduction measures.

Only days out from the Victorian State Election, neither the Liberal National Coalition or the Labor Party have committed to meaningful policy measures to address Victoria's heavy alcohol toll, which includes three deaths, 18 assaults and 81 hospitalisations every day.

A new report released by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) analysed Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) records of donations declared by Victorian political parties from 2010-11 to 2012-13\*. The AEC figures show that the alcohol industry is gifting sizeable sums to Victorian political parties. Most of the donations from the alcohol industry went to Victorian Liberals (\$546,042), followed by Victorian Labor (\$298,107) and the Victorian Nationals (\$57,680).

The Victorian Greens received no donations from the alcohol industry, as the Greens have a policy in place prohibiting them from accepting these donations.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn warns that we should be concerned by the generosity of the alcohol industry.

"Governments should be free to make reasoned decisions about important public health issues, without undue influence from the alcohol industry. My fear is that these sizeable donations ensure Labor and the Coalition are beholden to the alcohol industry, and are placing industry interests ahead of the people of Victoria," Mr Thorn said.

The largest alcohol industry contributor was the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) Victoria, an umbrella organisation representing hotels and alcohol retailers, many of whom would be affected by any changes to liquor legislation.

The AHA Victoria donated a massive \$686,681 to the Victorian political parties over the three years, accounting for 76% of all reported donations received from the alcohol industry. The second largest contributor was Crown, whose \$120,031 contribution made up 13 per cent of all industry donations.

Mr Thorn says it's time for the political parties to show their hand and release their alcohol harm prevention policies.

"We know that 75% of Victorians wanted Denis Napthine and Daniel Andrews to outline their parties plans to address alcohol-related harms. Yet only days out from the election, we're still waiting on serious commitments from both the Government and the Opposition. We should be asking the question, why have the parties not released their plans, and what role do alcohol industry donations play in ensuring their silence on policy?"

*\* Political donations are only required to be reported once they exceed the generous disclosure threshold which is now above \$12,000 a year.*

View the full report 'Alcohol Industry Donations to Victorian Political Parties: 2010-11 to 2012-13'.

**Michael Thorn (@Michael Thorn) is available for comment.**

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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 preventative 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.

For further information visit FARE's website: [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au).