



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Media Release

ALERT TO ALCOHOL CONCERNS, PM MUST NOW ACT

10 January 2014: Australia's leading alcohol research and education body has today welcomed the Prime Minister's expression of concern about the levels of alcohol-related violence in NSW and throughout Australia, and called on both Mr Abbott and NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell to accept responsibility for the issue.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) says addressing alcohol-related violence and harms is a Commonwealth and State and Territory Government responsibility, and can only be effectively addressed with strong action from both leaders.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says the Prime Minister has a duty to do more than simply acknowledge the extent of the problem.

"Today the Prime Minister prefaced his comments as those of a concerned father and citizen, but in fact he is far more than just a concerned parent standing powerlessly on the sidelines witnessing the bloody mayhem on Sydney's streets. If he is genuine in his concern, and as leader of our nation, he must now step up and play his part in a Commonwealth and State Government led solution," Mr Thorn said.

Premier O'Farrell has an equally important role to play.

Renewing his call on the NSW Premier to introduce meaningful reforms to address alcohol availability throughout the State, Mr Thorn has also called on the Commonwealth Government to introduce measures that would address the price and promotion of alcohol.

Mr Thorn says the role for the Commonwealth Government is clear and must begin with reform of the tax system.

"The Commonwealth Government must now do what the previous Labor Government failed repeatedly to address. To tackle preloading and alcohol fuelled violence in a meaningful way we need to overhaul the tax system to stop alcohol being sold for as little as 25 cents a standard drink," Mr Thorn said.

FARE has today also renewed its call on the Government to introduce reforms to prevent the prolific promotion of alcohol.

Between 2000 and 2012, across Australia more than 90 people have been killed as a consequence of king hits. Mr Thorn says that the time for talking and inaction has long since passed.

“If the Commonwealth Government wants to change the nation’s drinking culture, the Prime Minister will need to do more than make sympathetic noises. He needs to champion the reforms that the evidence already shows will make a difference: increase the price of alcohol, reduce its promotion, and support reasonable constraints on its availability,” Mr Thorn said.

FARE’s 3 best buys for the Commonwealth Government on alcohol policy

1. Introduce a differentiated volumetric alcohol taxation regime that takes into consideration the alcohol content of the products. This reform is supported by the public health sector, the majority of the alcohol industry and nine separate Government reviews.
2. Ban alcohol advertising at times and places where children and young people are present, including closing the loophole that allows alcohol advertising on television before 8.30pm as an accompaniment to live sport on weekends and public holidays.
3. Introduce a comprehensive, sustained public education campaign that is supported by a program for health professionals to talk to Australians about their alcohol use.

Michael Thorn is available for interview (@MichaelTThorn)

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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