



Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education

Annual Report 2018-2019

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Andrew Fairley



In society today when less alcohol is being consumed, yet the toll of alcohol-related death, disease and injury continues to climb, FARE's role of informing health policy and alerting consumers to the risks of alcohol has never been more critical.

FARE is the only national public health body dedicated to this work, and with alcohol remaining Australia's number one drug of concern the burden of alcohol harm needs to be the most important marker for policy settings to safeguard the public interest.

To achieve its vision and strategic goals, FARE continues to evolve and adapt the way in which we anticipate and address the drivers of alcohol-related harm: availability, price and marketing. Alcohol has never been cheaper, more readily accessible or more aggressively promoted through disruptive innovation.

In 2019, the Board has reviewed and reaffirmed the Strategic Plan 2017-2022. Alcohol is no ordinary commodity, which is why FARE remains steadfast in its efforts to address the magnitude of alcohol-related harm at the population level.

The use of alcohol results in a heavy social toll with almost 6,000 deaths and 144,000 hospitalisations every year, as well as community-wide costs worth around \$36 billion every year in healthcare, public safety, policing, courts and workplace productivity.

Priorities for FARE include highlighting the increasing assimilation of alcohol in society, pushed by the alcohol industry; bringing the growing burden of alcohol-related harm into sharper focus through evidence-based research and data; building community support for cultural change in the way people perceive and use alcohol; and advocating the case for strengthening alcohol regulation.

To this end, the Board is pleased to report that FARE has achieved many outcomes during the year that contribute to stopping the harm caused by alcohol, and these efforts are proudly showcased in this online Annual Report.

Andrew Fairley AM

LEAD CHANGE



KEEPING KIDS SAFE

No alcohol ads to kids. No Exception.

Extensive evidence shows that embedding alcohol advertising in sport normalises alcohol use by children.

Together with public health groups, sporting organisations and clubs, and grassroots supporters across Australia, FARE is leading the End Alcohol Advertising in Sport (EAAiS) campaign, aiming to ignite change across all professional sporting codes and build a better future for our kids by calling for alcohol advertising to be phased out of professional sport.

During the 2018/19 financial year, the EAAiS campaign achieved many milestones. Securing official Campaign Champions such as Mick Malthouse, Steve Ella and John Inverarity for the campaign's launch in October 2018 assisted in gaining extensive media coverage including 300 digital and print media outlets and five TV networks covering the

launch story. The campaign continues to enjoy media success with each new media story it produces.

In January 2019, the campaign signed Baseball Australia as the campaign's first official sporting partner. This is a coup for EAAiS and will see the campaign promoted nationally at Little League games on Baseball Australia's digital platforms, including its streaming broadcast TV service for the next two years.

Throughout the year the EAAiS employed innovative campaign strategies to build its supporter base quickly and effectively. The #NoException digital sub-campaign has allowed supporters to share content which speaks directly to the exemption allowing the alcohol industry to advertise during children's viewing hours across sporting programs on free-to-air TV.

At the close of the financial year, the campaign reached 8,000 signed-up supporters. This is a huge achievement only eight months since the launch of the campaign.



PROTECTING OUR FUTURE

Giving the 300,000 babies born in Australia each year the best possible start in life.

FARE is championing change and seeking to address the 75,000 alcohol-exposed pregnancies in Australia each year.

FARE's Pregnant Pause campaign aims to raise awareness of the current alcohol and pregnancy guidelines that no alcohol is the safest option while pregnant.

The campaign makes it easier on mums-to-be by encouraging Australians to take the pledge to go alcohol-free during their pregnancy, or the pregnancy of a loved one.

After three years, the Pregnant Pause campaign concluded its ACT program. It successfully built campaign awareness from 15 per cent to 56 per cent at the conclusion of the 2018/19 financial year and raised awareness of the current alcohol and pregnancy guidelines to 83 per cent within the Canberra community.

During the 2018/19 financial year, the campaign expanded nationally thanks to funding received from the Commonwealth Government. This funding also enabled the Women Want to Know program to provide accredited training to health professionals throughout Australia to further support pregnant women to abstain from alcohol consumption and normalise alcohol-free pregnancies throughout Australia.

REDUCE RISKY DRINKING: CREATING A NEW NORM

Reduce Risky Drinking is a FARE project using a social norms-based approach that aims to reduce harmful drinking among university students in the Australian Capital Territory by challenging perceptions about 'normal' alcohol use on university campuses.

Social norms interventions attempt to correct misperceptions by providing information about the true prevalence of the behaviour, and in its second year, the project rolled out a multi-media campaign including posters on campus, and a social media campaign using a series of contemporary, short animated videos with project targeting university students in Canberra.

The campaign collateral aimed to challenge students' perceptions about consumption, highlighting that heavy drinking is not as prevalent as they may think, with the project's own research showing one in four students do not drink at all, and that university students tend to overestimate the levels to which their peers are drinking.

STRATEGIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

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NATIONAL ELECTION PLATFORM: PROTECTING FAMILIES FROM HARM

FARE promotes policies that foster safer, healthier communities.

With a federal election looming in May, FARE's 2019 Election Platform outlined four key areas for the incoming government to prioritise to reduce alcohol harm. These included:

- Informing consumers about the long-term health effects of drinking alcohol
- Preventing lifelong disability by stopping alcohol use during pregnancy
- Reducing alcohol-fuelled family violence through actions that address alcohol as a risk factor
- Protecting children and young people from alcohol

advertising.

As a complementary activity, FARE recognised the opportunity and importance of informing voters on party positions on alcohol policy, providing relevant, cut-through information during a time that political coverage and the already tumultuous media cycle reaches peak frenzy.

Ahead of the 2019 Federal Election, FARE wrote to major political parties to identify where they stood on key alcohol policy measures aimed at protecting Australians from alcohol harm and creating safer, healthier communities.



STOPPING ALCOHOL HARM IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The introduction of historic alcohol policy reform was critical. Now the defence of those

measures is vital.

The Northern Territory already has the highest rates of alcohol-related death and hospitalisations in Australia, to the extent that if the NT was a country it would be in the top ten alcohol-using nations on the planet.

That's why FARE is standing shoulder to shoulder with communities in the NT to resist the introduction of a Woolies alcohol superstore in Darwin.

Through a combination of legal proceedings, advocacy, social media and commentary, FARE has maintained pressure as the NT Liquor Commission considers Woolworths' application to establish a big-box Dan Murphy's in Darwin.

The Commission's public hearing on Woolworths' licence application was conducted over five days in June, with a decision expected to be announced in September 2019.

FARE and co-objectors argued that introducing packaged liquor barns in the NT would undermine the NT Government's alcohol reforms, including the Minimum Unit Price, as it would lead to increased alcohol consumption and greater risk of alcohol-fuelled harm, especially in vulnerable communities.

During the legal process, the Commission was provided with comprehensive evidence regarding alcohol harm, including research showing that every time a big-box liquor barn is built there is a 35 per cent increase in harm to that community, including bashings, stabbings, shootings and injuries.



KEEPING COUNTRY AND RURAL COMMUNITIES SAFE

Highlighting the disproportionate level of alcohol-related harm in rural NSW.

Being a state election year, NSW alcohol policy has been a priority focus for FARE and the NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA). The challenge has been that while the major parties were strongly posturing on drug policy, the state's most harmful drug, alcohol, was given little attention.

NAAPA warned that all parties were focused illegal substances, prescription drugs and pill testing, while continuing to fail in their duty of care to address the harm from alcohol.

What did catch the attention of the media was the disproportionate level of alcohol-related harm in rural NSW, and the associated issues of drought, isolation and lack of services.

In rural communities, domestic assaults are 12-times higher compared to NSW as a whole, while alcohol is a factor in 85 per cent of rural road crash fatalities compared to 17 per cent in major NSW cities.

DEFEND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

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UNCOVERING GOVERNMENT PRO-ALCOHOL BIAS

FARE joined forces with a CSIRO whistle-blower to expose to the public the links Australia's leading scientific organisation has with the alcohol industry, and its pro-alcohol research bias.

After former CSIRO employee, Dr Saul Newman, published an article in *The Lancet* questioning why the Commonwealth Government spends taxpayer money funding pro-alcohol research considering the health and economic impact the drug has upon the community, FARE reached out to Dr Newman to further explore the details of his allegations.

FARE catapulted the story to national news when *The Guardian* published an article on the damning allegations, which were also initially published on FARE's blog *Drink Tank*.

FARE followed-up these public revelations with a FOI request to the CSIRO which exposed internal emails by CSIRO staff collaborating with Wine Australia to ensure both organisations "sing from the same song sheet" and concerns about sharing the same Board Member becoming widely known.

CALLING OUT CAUSE-WASHING

FARE will always hold the alcohol industry to account, call out its shameless stunts – such as 'cause-washing', and tirelessly fight to defend the public interest.

This year's disgraceful partnership between Woolworths alcohol chain BWS, and cancer fundraiser movement Dry July was a shocking and ill-conceived sobriety stunt, which was announced via an industry-branded media release carrying the headline, "BWS Becomes 'Because We're Sober' for Dry July".

To counter this ludicrous and disingenuous campaign, FARE engaged with the press to condemn the irresponsible partnership, highlighting that alcohol is a class 1 carcinogen, with more than 3200 Australians developing alcohol-attributable cancer each year. The story received substantial national media coverage.

FARE also wrote to Dry July's beneficiary organisations, including many cancer groups, imploring them to intervene immediately and to ensure that Dry July repels the influence of the alcohol industry in the future.

It's safest not to drink while pregnant.

Pregnant women should avoid alcohol because it crosses from the mother's blood stream to the fetus and can affect the baby's development.

YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM: Alcohol can temporarily suppress the immune system – making you susceptible to illness.

YOUR HEART: Long-term and excessive drinking can increase your risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, weakening of the heart muscle and heart failure.

YOUR BREASTS: Breast cancer is the most prevalent cancer among women. Recent studies



KEEPING INDUSTRY HONEST ABOUT ALCOHOL HARM

One of FARE's strategic goals is upholding the public interest and maintaining 'truth' in policy, health promotion and public discourse about alcohol-related harm.

This involves constant vigilance to call out unethical and misleading alcohol industry marketing.

The industry also purports to be a proactive provider of health information, which disguises their real aim of staving off responsible and effective alcohol regulation.

A major case was an industry campaign in July 2018 about the

risk of alcohol in pregnancy. The DrinkWise materials distributed to GP surgeries included the false statement, "it's not known if alcohol is safe to drink when you are pregnant".

FARE successfully forced the industry to correct the messaging. This example of industry deception and misinformation has featured in a UK research study, which gained national media attention.



MANDATORY ALCOHOL PREGNANCY WARNING LABELS: HUGE WIN FOR CONSUMERS

Over the last decade FARE has been working tirelessly to ensure mandatory pregnancy warning labels are on all packaged alcohol beverages.

In a big win for Australians,

October 2019 saw Australian State and Territory Food Ministers together with their New Zealand counterparts finally guarantee alcohol products would include effective warning labels that state that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption for pregnant women.

This comes after seven years of industry inaction, with less than half of all alcohol products sold in Australia containing warning labels about alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

FARE commended a decision to mandate pregnancy warning labels which will help ensure Australians are better informed of the dangers around drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

"This is a win for consumers and a critically important decision that will save lives and reduce the pain that is caused as a result of what is a preventable, but lifelong disability."

- Trish Hepworth, FARE Director, policy and Research

WORLD LEADING RESEARCH

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DECADE OF DECEPTION: ANNUAL ALCOHOL POLL

"Australians remain concerned about alcohol, want governments to do more, and demand as consumers, the right to information that will keep them safe from harm."

- Michael Thorn, FARE Chief Executive

Now in its tenth year, The Poll shows, disappointingly, a steady climb over the past decade of people drinking to get drunk and has found Australians remain confused about what constitutes low-risk and high-risk alcohol consumption.

The Poll also revealed the dangerous lack of clarity among Australians about the long-term risks of consuming alcohol, including cancer of the pharynx, larynx, oesophagus and liver, and that fewer than half of Australians are aware of the link between alcohol use and mouth and throat cancer and breast cancer.

It is not surprising Australians are confused about cancer and other health risks when nebulous terms such as 'drink responsibly' and 'drink in moderation' are commonplace in alcohol marketing.

ALCOHOL MARKETING AND THE 2018 AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL FINALS

FARE is committed to supporting and translating world-leading research to inform and protect against alcohol harm.

In October 2018 as an activity linked to FARE's End Alcohol Advertising in Sport campaign, FARE released a research report exposing the extent of alcohol marketing which occurred during the 2018 Australian Football League (AFL) and National Rugby League (NRL) football finals.

The report revealed an astounding finding of just under 1 instance (0.7) of alcohol advertising per minute during AFL, and 3.3 per minute during NRL grand final coverage.

The findings were released in a research report and accompanying media release, which received extensive national media coverage across multiple platforms, and have provided FARE and the End Alcohol Advertising in Sport campaign with a valuable resource to reference for both strategy and advocacy work.



Shop Now. Enjoy Now. Pay Later.

MEDIA AMPLIFIES DANGERS OF DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Vulnerable people tracked, targeted and enticed to purchase alcohol online.

During the past 12 months, FARE has taken and created several opportunities through policy advocacy and media commentary to raise awareness of the elevated risks of alcohol harm due to the introduction of disruptive technology in the retail space.

FARE's call to ban the use of after-pay credit services to purchase alcohol products made front-page news, and in submission after submission we addressed the overarching issue of vulnerable people – including dependent drinkers and underage drinkers – being tracked, targeted and enticed to purchase alcohol online.

FARE argued that having more options and easier methods to

buy alcohol on impulse and have it immediately delivered was a lose/lose scenario that could lead to decisions later regretted, or to breaking the law.



PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S HEAVIEST DRINKERS

FARE-commissioned research revealed the strongest characteristic shared by Australia's heaviest drinkers is their thirst for cheap alcohol, reinforcing the role of price control as a measure to reduce alcohol harm.

The study, Examining Australia's Heaviest Drinkers, was undertaken by FARE's research partner the Centre for Alcohol

Policy and Research (CAPR) at La Trobe University, and published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.

Lead author, Dr Michael Livingston said the research results confirmed that the heaviest drinking ten per cent of Australians drink more than half of all alcohol consumed in Australia, with cheap alcohol the standout common factor among the cohort.

The finding clearly show that the government has a responsibility to address the problem of cheap alcohol by fixing the way alcohol is taxed, introducing floor prices and halting the proliferation of harm-causing packaged alcohol products.



Foundation for Alcohol
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STOPPING HARM CAUSED BY ALCOHOL

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