

EXPOSED: ALCOHOL INDUSTRY THROWS BIG TOBACCO INSPIRED SMOKE SCREEN AT NT REVIEW

15 August 2017: A new submission to the Northern Territory Alcohol Review has exposed the lengths the alcohol industry is prepared to go to undermine and attack scientific evidence in a blatant and deliberate attempt to mislead the inquiry.

Public health experts say alcohol industry submissions to the NT Alcohol Policies and Legislative Review, including those from Woolworths' Endeavour Drinks Group, Alcohol Beverages Australia and Brewers Association, conspire to undermine science by merchandising doubt in a manner straight out the tobacco industry's playbook.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education's (FARE) supplementary submission to the review, *The Tobacco effect: The alcohol industry casting doubt*, exposes those industry tactics and sets the record straight.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says it is clear from the alcohol industry's submissions and approach to the NT Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review that they have borrowed heavily from the big tobacco playbook.

"What we are seeing in the Northern Territory from the alcohol industry is a pattern of lying and denying; a concerted effort by the likes of Woolworths and Alcohol Beverages Australia to cast doubt on scientific evidence in order to defeat life-saving policy solutions, in favour of their own profit margins," Mr Thorn said.

Industry submissions from Brewers Association and Woolworths' Australian Leisure and Hospitality Group (ALH) attempted to cast doubt on the evidence of alcohol pricing.

"Evidence demonstrates that price controls are ineffective at targeting the harmful consumption of alcohol, and instead reduce overall per capita consumption levels." Brewers Association

"Taxation changes or a minimum (floor) price are inefficient and inequitable method of addressing alcohol-related harm which would impact on moderate and responsible drinkers..." ALH Group

Mr Thorn says alcohol-pricing policies are in fact recognised as one of the most effective measures to reduce harmful consumption.

"What we are seeing is an attempt to cast doubt and uncertainty, in the face of undisputed evidence. A meta-analysis of 112 peer-reviewed studies on the effects of alcohol price and taxation levels on alcohol consumption found that there was overwhelming evidence on the positive effects of alcohol



pricing on drinking. It is cost effective and successful in reducing consumption and consequent harms in targeted groups such as risky drinkers and young people,” Mr Thorn said.

FARE’s submission also identifies industry attempts to cast doubt on the quality of independent scientific peer reviewed research.

Endeavour Drinks Group falsely claimed in its submission that research into big box liquor stores by Dr Chris Morrison was not peer reviewed.

To the contrary, the research, which found that big box liquor stores were statistically associated with an increased occurrence of intentional and unintentional injuries, has in fact been published by two scientific peer reviewed journals, *Addiction*, and *Drug and Alcohol Review*.

Mr Thorn says the alcohol industry is desperate to resist government regulation, and will undermine the science and the scientists to do so.

“The alcohol industry is critiquing research that is not disputed, spreading doubt when the evidence is clear, manufacturing false debate, attacking legitimate science and scientists, and creating lavish, industry-funded disinformation campaigns,” Mr Thorn said.

FARE’s submission releases ahead of tonight’s Alcohol Beverages Australia inaugural *Celebration of Industry Dinner* in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Canberra.

Mr Thorn says the dinner is no cause for celebration.

“The alcohol industry is threatened by the introduction of policy measures that would save lives but also impact their bottom lines. And in response we see them double down, lying and denying the evidence before them and wining and dining politicians and public officials in order to oppose public regulation, at any cost,” Mr Thorn said.

Michael Thorn is available for interview.

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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 preventive 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.