

NT ALCOHOL FLOOR PRICE COMMENCEMENT SETS STAGE FOR WIDER NATIONAL APPLICATION

1 October 2018: On the eve of the introduction of Minimum Unit Price (MUP) in the Northern Territory, the People's Alcohol Action Coalition (paac) and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) say the Gunner Government is to be congratulated for putting the evidence first, and in turn prioritising the health, welfare and safety of the people of the NT.

The successful introduction of a floor price on alcohol in the NT now opens the door to its introduction across Australia, and should positively impact the development of the Commonwealth Government's draft *National Alcohol Strategy*.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn stresses the legislation will provide universal benefits to all Territorians, and is another important step towards tackling the NT's severe alcohol problems.

"A floor price is a win for the people of the NT. World-high rates of drinking are finally being addressed with a world-leading alcohol policy intervention; an evidence-based solution that will have no impact on light and moderate drinkers, but will lead to decreased alcohol consumption among the Top End's heaviest drinkers," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn said it was important to remember that the MUP was just one part of a comprehensive package of evidence-based reforms that would prioritise health and welfare throughout the Territory, and commended the Gunner Government on its resolve to tackle the Territory's long-standing problems with heavy drinking.

"There is no doubt that the introduction of the floor price in the NT is a landmark achievement, but we must remember that is just one part of a comprehensive plan that also includes measures such as the Banned Drinkers Register and efforts to curb aggressive alcohol marketing, that once implemented will result in less alcohol violence, crime, hospitalisations and death in the Territory, Mr Thorn said.

Dr John Boffa, spokesperson for the Peoples Alcohol Action Coalition (paac) says his organisation has been advocating for many of these alcohol policy reforms since 1995 with a continued focus on the harm being caused by really cheap alcohol.

"Over 30 years of working as a GP in Central Australia it is clear that grog, priced cheaper than water, is more like a form of poison in terms of the harm that it generates. The harm is a factor of price, not product type" said Dr Boffa.

“There have been various attempts over the years to remove this really cheap alcohol from the market, all with some success, but the holy grail has always been the achievement of a floor price, so this is a great development for public health in the Northern Territory.”

Dr Boffa says that in 2006, the Alice Springs Liquor supply plan effectively doubled the minimum unit price by forcing products from the market, achieving a near 20 per cent reduction in alcohol consumption in the town and a significant cut in harm, including about 120 fewer hospital admissions per year for Aboriginal women for assault.

“We know that increasing the price works and it is very likely that the MUP combined with the other measures being implemented by the NT government will see drinking levels in the NT drop below the national average, which will be a great outcome for the people of the Northern Territory,” he concluded.

The [WHO Global status report on alcohol and health 2018](#) released last week, highlighted the gap between drinking rates in the Territory and the rest of the world, with the NT’s average per capita alcohol consumption almost double the world average of 6.4 litres of pure alcohol.

“Our aspiration should be to halve the Territory’s alcohol consumption levels and to knock the Territory off the world leader board for most dangerous drinking jurisdiction. In doing so, we will reduce the alcohol burden that weighs so heavily on communities throughout the Top End,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn stresses that there are also significant national implications.

“In the absence of a willingness at the Commonwealth level to address the availability of cheap alcohol through meaningful taxation reform, it is up to the States and Territories to follow the lead of the NT,” Mr Thorn said.

“Indeed the Western Australian Government is currently doing just that. And on the national stage, there is the opportunity to influence the National Alcohol Strategy so that it is informed by the range of evidence-based, life-saving measures being introduced into the NT, and not by an alcohol industry resistant to any measures that would impact its bottom line.”

Mr Thorn and Dr John Boffa are 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.

The **People's Alcohol Action Coalition (paac)** originated in Alice Springs in the mid-1990s as PAAG – the People’s Alcohol Action Group – a community-based response to growing awareness of excessive alcohol use and associated harm in the central Australian region.