

## **‘Substantial’ cost of NT’s alcohol problem revealed as reforms show signs of success**

**28 February 2019:** The Northern Territory (NT) Government’s alcohol measures are beginning to have the desired effect of alleviating harm; but new research calculating the cost of alcohol to be more substantial and expensive for all Territorians highlights the urgency for continuing reform.

Michael Thorn from the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) says the initial success of the measures to address the availability and price of alcohol in the NT, such as the Minimum Unit Price, the Banned Drinker Register and the Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors, is encouraging.

“The reforms are doing the job of reducing alcohol consumption, which is evident from the decrease in alcohol-related assaults and emergency department presentations,” Mr Thorn said.

“It is encouraging that the ground-breaking recommendations of the Riley Review of alcohol policy in the NT are putting in place an effective, integrated process. However, this new evidence on the cost of harm shows that concerted efforts are needed now to address the longstanding problems caused by alcohol across the Territory,” he said.

FARE is a leading proponent of evidence-based alcohol policy and Mr Thorn says the updated evidence on the cost of alcohol harm in the NT by the Menzies School of Health Research is important to enable the NT community to come to terms with the scale of the problems linked with alcohol in their cities, towns and communities.

The report estimates the social and economic costs of alcohol-related harm have increased from \$642 million in 2009 to \$1.38 billion per year in 2015-16, better reflecting the extent and cost of harm.

This research gives the NT Government an understanding of the real cost of alcohol harm based on more recent data, which can guide their policymaking and service delivery.

“This research also highlights the multi-faceted nature of alcohol harm and the importance of having integrated responses from the health, justice, child protection and police sectors,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says the rising cost of alcohol harm should ring alarm bells for NT Liquor Commission as it considers Woolworths’ application to flood the Territory with even more booze.

“With the true cost of harm now in bold print – and stark dollar-figures linked to the issues of premature death, injury, disease, crime, road trauma, violence and child protection issues – the grounds for rejecting the Woolworths’ application are further strengthened,” Mr Thorn concluded.



**Mr Thorn is available for interview.**

**Media contact:**

Clare Ross 02 6122 8616 or 0429 291 120

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. Nearly 6,000 lives are lost every year and more than 144,000 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 harm 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.