

CAVALRY UNDERAGE DRINKING SCANDAL PUTS SPOTLIGHT ON SPORT'S UNHEALTHY PARTNERSHIP WITH ALCOHOL

Tuesday, 8 May 2018: The Canberra Cavalry Baseball Team and the Australian Baseball League are facing mounting criticism over a damning video made public today highlighting a dangerous and harmful alcohol culture at the Canberra Club.

The video filmed on Saturday, 27 January 2018 immediately following the Cavalry's home loss to Brisbane, shows senior player, Boss Moanaroa successfully encouraging underage youths to participate in the harmful consumption of alcohol.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says the footage clearly depicts a dangerous alcohol culture within the club and a lack of alcohol policy controls that should protect club members from harm.

"The video is damning. The club has failed in its duty of care to its young players, and it clearly speaks to a lack alcohol policy measures and enforcement within the club and the Australian Baseball League that should keep underage players safe from harm," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says he is equally troubled by the League and the club's silence on the matter after failing to respond to a written request for a meeting to discuss the video, sent on 9 April 2018.

"FARE wrote to both the Australian Baseball League and the Canberra Cavalry requesting an urgent meeting and the opportunity to discuss ways in which the League and Club could ensure the health and safety of its members, but also demonstrate a commitment to promoting a healthier and safer culture to its supporter base, many of who are children. The Club and the League's failure to respond is troubling," Mr Thorn said

Those sentiments are echoed by former Canberra Cavalry development coach, John Edwards, who claims the video is not a one-off aberration, but evidence of an insidious, well established and long ignored harmful alcohol culture.

Mr Edwards has personally raised his concerns about the Canberra Cavalry's poor culture, including bullying of young players along with drug and alcohol use and claims there is not only a lack of accountability from the front office and coaches about these matters, but a complete unwillingness to act.

"The club has lost a number of players due to these issues, but to date, my concerns have fallen on deaf ears. I hope publication of the video is a wakeup call to the Club and the League that these problems will no longer be ignored," Mr Edwards said.



Mr Thorn says the negative impact of alcohol in sport, both on players and more widely on children through their exposure to alcohol advertising, is a problem that extends beyond baseball and across Australia's major sporting codes. However, he believes codes such as the Australian Baseball League could lead from the front on the issue if they chose to do so.

"Ultimately this is a problem that extends beyond the baseball diamond and beyond the clubhouse. Millions of Australian children are exposed to alcohol advertising through sport, and all the evidence shows that such exposure is associated with young people drinking more and from an earlier age.

The Australian Baseball League and the Canberra Cavalry have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership not only across the league but to the Australian public by cleaning up its dangerous alcohol culture and severing its alcohol sponsorship ties," Mr Thorn said.

End Alcohol Advertising in Sport is a national campaign developed by FARE with the express purpose of protecting children from alcohol advertising.

The campaign is proudly endorsed and supported by Australian Health Promotion Association, McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Public Health Association of Australia, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, St Vincent's Health Australia and Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

Mr Thorn and Mr Edwards are available for interview.

Media contact:

Jeremy Henderson 0425 559 710

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 6000 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.