

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST YOUTH INDIGENOUS DRUG AND ALCOHOL REHABILITATION FACILITY LEADS THE WAY FOR FUTURE TREATMENT SERVICES

December 15, 2011: Today, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) celebrates the opening of *Bunjilwarra*, the first Australian drug and alcohol rehabilitation service solely dedicated to helping young Aboriginal people.

Established by a \$5 million joint funding partnership between FARE and the Victorian Department of Health, Bunjilwarra will be officially opened today by the Hon Mary Wooldridge, Minister for Mental Health, Women's Affairs and Community Services.

Situated in Hastings on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, Bunjilwarra will service 12 Aboriginal people between the ages of 15 and 20, and has been specially designed to be more culturally welcoming for Aboriginal youths.

Scott Wilson, FARE's Deputy Chairman and the State Director of the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc, attended the opening ceremony and applauded the initiative.

"More than half the indigenous population in Australia is under the age of 26 so we have a lot of young people and need to try and reach them in ways that have the best chance of success," Mr Wilson said.

"Bunjilwarra offers that chance because it is being established by Aboriginals with Aboriginals in mind. It will be far more family oriented than other treatment centres and will be culturally appropriate, so that the chances of successful rehabilitation are far greater."

Mr Wilson said governments and organisations throughout Australia were grappling with Aboriginal substance abuse problems, but that Bunjilwarra offered hope for the future.

"I've spent the past 18 years working on the issue of Indigenous alcohol and substance abuse, and around the same number of years before that being personally involved with alcohol and substance abuse, and this is an exciting day.

"This is a real step in the right direction and I'd encourage other state governments to follow Victoria's lead and adopt and adapt what we have done here."

Mr Wilson, who joined the FARE board when the organisation was established in 2001, said he considered FARE deserved to be acknowledged for its pioneering work in this area.

"We took a chance and gave a \$1 million grant to establish the Bunjilwarra facility, and now, a few years down the track, we are at the official opening. It makes me really proud of our involvement," he said.

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Scott Wilson is available for interview.

Media Contact: Sam North 0407 941 447

Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education (FARE): FARE – formerly the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation - is an independent, charitable organisation working to prevent the harmful use of alcohol in Australia. Since 2001, FARE has invested over \$115 million in research and community projects to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse on Australians. Through our national grants program and commissioned research, the FARE has established itself as a leading voice on alcohol and other drugs issues. We work with community groups, all levels of government, police, emergency workers, research institutions and the private sector to address alcohol-related problems. For further information visit our website: www.fare.org.au