

## MEDIA RELEASE

# NEW RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS HARMS FROM MIXING ALCOHOL AND ENERGY DRINKS

**14 November 2011:** Leading alcohol research organisation, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), is calling for urgent action to stem the growth in consumption of alcohol and caffeine-enhanced energy drinks, including a ban on the sale of premixed products.

Research into consumption habits, commissioned by FARE and undertaken by Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, will be presented at a major alcohol and drug conference in Hobart on Monday (November 14).

The research, conducted by Turning Point's Amy Pennay, found that the consumption of alcohol and energy drinks in Australia is now the norm, with young people consuming between three and five alcohol and energy drinks a night, and some drinking as many as ten – well above recommended limits .

"The research highlights the harms that result from mixing alcohol and energy drinks including increased heart-rate, increased likelihood of vomiting, sleeplessness and a worse hangover," Ms Pennay said.

Alcohol and energy drinks are also routinely used by young people to stay out longer than they normally would be able to, resulting in them ignoring their bodies messages that it's time to call it a night.

The report found that energy drinks were marketed cleverly and were highly associated with fun and energy. They were also well promoted and heavily discounted at some venues. There was "an absence of public messages about the negative consequences of energy drink use."

Michael Thorn, Chief Executive of FARE, said authorities throughout the world were grappling with problems caused by growth in the consumption of energy drinks. "In America last year the US Food and Drug Administration moved to ban premixed alcohol and energy drinks, in Norway the drinks can only be sold through pharmacies, while in Canada they have to have a label stating they should not be consumed with alcohol."

"We are just starting to come to terms with the potential problems with such drinks and in light of the overseas experience we strongly believe governments need to take action ."

Mr Thorn said FARE was calling for:

- Banning pre-mixed alcohol and energy drinks;
- Banning promotions on mixing alcohol and energy drinks in licensed premises;

- Public education on the potential damages that can result from mixing alcohol and energy drinks;
- Labeling energy drinks with warnings about the potential harms associated with mixing alcohol and energy drinks;
- Asking liquor licensing authorities to investigate whether energy drinks should be sold on licensed premises.

In a study of the international literature, the research found that there was a “substantial and growing” body of work emphasising the harms associated with mixing alcohol with energy drinks.

The research will be presented at the annual conference of the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) in Hobart.

Michael Thorn and lead researcher Amy Pennay are available for interview.

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**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](http://www.fare.org.au)

**Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre:** Turning Point (established 1994 and based in Fitzroy) provides leadership to the Victorian alcohol and drug sector. It promotes the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities living with, and affected by, alcohol, other drug-related harms and gambling. Turning Point amalgamated with public health provider, **Eastern Health** in October 2009 and is formally affiliated with Monash University.