



MEDIA RELEASE

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FLAWED FINDINGS: ALCOHOL INDUSTRY CALLED OUT OVER SELF-SERVING SPIN

23 January, 2014: The Australian Liquor Stores Association (ALSA) has been loudly criticised for attempting to downplay the significance of alcohol harms in Australia, ahead of one of the industry's most lucrative public holidays.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the ALSA report is deliberately misleading and self-serving.

"Alcohol kills 15 Australians a day and hospitalises a further 430. The Australian Liquor Stores Association can cherry pick numbers, omit data, and spin the findings to serve its purpose all day long, but what it can't do is make those very real harms disappear and the packaged liquor industry has to accept its share of responsibility," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says ALSA's motivations for releasing the report are very clear.

"Despite what the alcohol industry might suggest, it is concerned by the declines in underage drinking because it impacts on their ability to recruit new drinkers. The alcohol industry is worried that consumers are becoming more concerned about the very real harms from alcohol, and ALSA is fearful that Governments are increasingly becoming more open to introducing measures that impact on the availability of alcohol, measures that would constrain the growth of liquor outlets," Mr Thorn said.

While pointing to the decline in per capita consumption of alcohol, the ALSA report neglected to breakdown any data by gender or age.

A closer examination reveals the numbers of Australians drinking at dangerous levels and above the recommended guidelines showing 42 per cent of drinkers drinking 5+ drinks on a monthly basis, 15.8 per cent of drinkers drinking 11+ drinks on a monthly basis and 5 per cent of drinkers drinking 20+ drinks on a monthly basis.

Mr Thorn also takes ALSA to task for claiming the alcohol industry had played any role in reducing alcohol harms, or changing alcohol consumption patterns.



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

“It is true that we have seen a reduction in underage drinking, but it is laughable to suggest that those changes are thanks to ALSA or the alcohol industry. Any changes in young people’s drinking patterns are due to other factors such as the introduction of tougher secondary supply laws, and the tax increases on alco-pops,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says the ALSA report is more revealing by what it neglects to tell the people of Australia, than by what it actually contains.

“Countless peer-reviewed journal articles have demonstrated the link between alcohol outlet density and alcohol harms, but ALSA chooses to dismiss the science. Alcohol harms in Australia are significant, but again ALSA steadfastly ignores those devastating harms from alcohol and the very real lives destroyed,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn said the timing of the report was no coincidence.

“It is impossible to see the ALSA report as anything but a cynical ploy to pretend the problem doesn’t exist, in the hope that their member’s cash registers ring loudly on the Australia Day long weekend - one of the alcohol industry’s most lucrative trading periods,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) is 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 preventative 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. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.