



22 June 2016

Mr Michael Thorn
Chief Executive
Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education
PO Box 19
Deakin West ACT 2600

Dear Mr Thorn,

Thank you for your recent correspondence on behalf of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), giving Labor the opportunity to state our position on the community harm caused by alcohol, especially as it affects children and families. We apologise for the delay in responding to you.

FARE has played a vitally important research and public education role for more than 15 years, building evidence and encouraging communities, industry and policy-makers to take action to prevent alcohol-related harm.

Labor recognises that Australia has a significant challenge in relation to alcohol consumption and acknowledges the unacceptable level of harm it can cause.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians estimates that alcohol misuse causes 5,000 deaths and 150,000 hospitalisations every year. As well as the profound personal and social costs, the economic costs of this, including healthcare costs and lost productivity, have been estimated to be as high as \$36 billion a year.

In his address to the Australian Medical Association's National Alcohol Summit in October 2014, Bill Shorten highlighted the urgent need to tackle alcohol-related violence and alcohol-related harm through a national strategic approach and coordination.

National Alcohol Strategy

A Shorten Labor Government will develop a new National Alcohol Strategy as part of a comprehensive \$300 million Building Healthy Communities and Preventing Chronic Disease Prevention Plan.

The Strategy will focus on evidence-based measures to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms, including alcohol-related violence. It will also focus on the riskiest behaviours, like binge drinking, and the most vulnerable populations, like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and young Australians.

BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

As part of the Strategy, Labor will strengthen work to limit alcohol advertising to children and work with State, Territory and local government to reduce children's exposure in other settings.

The Strategy will be a systemic, holistic response to the health, economic and wellbeing challenges posed by excessive alcohol consumption.

Alcohol abuse treatment services

When it comes to tackling the harms caused by alcohol, Labor understands that we need to invest in treatment. When people decide that they want to turn their life around we need to make sure that they can access the help they need.

Currently, treatment services across Australia that receive Federal Government funds have no long-term funding security. Because of the Abbott-Turnbull Government's neglect of the sector they have no certainty about their future.

A Shorten Labor Government will invest \$31.8 million in a new drug and alcohol strategy and provide longer-term funding certainty for treatment services.

As part of this, our \$7 million Local Solutions Fund will provide targeted support for certain regions which are especially vulnerable to problems caused by alcohol and drug abuse. If we can prevent substance misuse and provide timely treatment and support for those who need it, we can change people's lives and help at-risk communities.

We want to constantly improve the entire treatment sector and Labor understands that the major cost for any treatment service is staffing. Services need highly-trained and competent professionals working on the front-line and supporting people to beat addiction is labour-intensive.

Labor will drive improvement in the Federal Government-funded treatment workforce and strengthen community confidence in the sector by dedicating \$22 million to a National Capability Plan.

The Plan will deliver consistency of service provision through a National Support Program featuring the implementation of nation-wide quality standards. It will also enhance client outcomes through a professional capacity-building program. The program will support workers involved in direct client care to obtain relevant post-graduate qualifications.

This way, whether someone is receiving treatment in the Kimberley, inner-city Sydney or rural Victoria – adherence to the standards will be the same. Labor will also make sure that workers on the front-line are obtaining the training and skills they need to help people turn their lives around.

BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) plan

A Shorten Labor Government will also implement an \$18 million plan to tackle Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) by helping communities to develop stronger responses to FASD, particularly in remote and isolated communities, where the disorder is having a particularly harsh impact.

Labor's FASD plan includes:

- Provision of specialist support services to pregnant women with alcohol-related disorders and to implement the FASD diagnostic instrument.
- Establishment of FASD diagnostic service clinics to conduct research into the best models for delivering care.
- Boosting training for health professionals to increase their awareness of FASD and facilitate the use of the disorder's diagnostic instrument.

Response to Family Violence

Labor acknowledges the nightmare of family violence, with an estimated one in three Australian women experiencing physical violence since the age of 15.

Labor will deliver around \$200 million in targeted funding to ensure those suffering from family violence can access critical services when they need them.

A Shorten Labor Government will also invest \$8 million in perpetrator mapping to look at the interactions across family violence, law enforcement, justice, child protection and related systems to help identify opportunities to prevent violence through information sharing.

There are terrible consequences from alcohol abuse across Australia. Finalising and implementing Labor's National Alcohol Strategy will be a high priority for an incoming Shorten Labor Government.

Yours sincerely,

ALP Information Services Unit

Australian Labor Campaign Headquarters

www.alp.org.au

BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

PO BOX 6222, KINGSTON ACT 2604 ABN 38 318 251 221
T 03 8625 5000, Twitter: @AustralianLabor, facebook.com/LaborConnect, www.alp.org.au

Authorised by G. Wright, Australian Labor Party, 5/9 Sydney Avenue, Barton, ACT, 2600