



LIQUOR ACT REVIEW: NAME AND SHAME OFFENDING LICENSEES

20 October 2015: Licensed venues that fail to comply with the ACT Liquor Act should be named, shamed and hit with tougher penalties including a ‘three strikes’ disciplinary scheme and violent premises list as operated in New South Wales.

The New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) says holding a liquor licence should be a privilege not a right, and that the ACT Government review process now underway provides an important opportunity to increase transparency and public reporting of those ACT venues not obeying the law.

In its submission to the *ACT Issues paper: Proposals for regulatory improvements*, NAAPA has reiterated that the priority for the ACT Government must be to reduce the late night trading hours by introducing a 3am close and 1am lockout for on-licence premises, and a 10pm close for packaged liquor.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive, Michael Thorn welcomes the ongoing regulatory review process and says the current system is not adequately mitigating the harms from alcohol.

“We have more than 18 people presenting to ACT emergency departments each day as a result of an alcohol-related injury, so it is abundantly clear that there is more work to be done to ensure the Liquor Act is prioritising community health and safety above all else. Clearly, the public have a right to know about the harms and risks associated with venues in the Territory, and disclosing that information would in turn encourage those venues breaking the law to clean up their act or lose business,” Mr Thorn said.

While welcoming the opportunity to provide feedback on other measures that would further strengthen the ACT Liquor Act, Mr Thorn warns against the introduction of any measures that would see a reduction in fees for licensees that obey the law.

“Rewarding licensees for complying with legislation is akin to rewarding citizens for simply abiding by the law. It is vital that we have a system in place that ensures the Territory’s liquor licensees are more accountable for the associated alcohol harms. The current ACT annual risk-based licensing (RBL) system recognises that fact by ensuring there is a fee imposed on all licensees to operate, as well as additional penalties and fees for venues that breach provisions of the Act, and any move to weaken the scheme would be a grave error,” Mr Thorn said.



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

NAAPA has also called for changes to the ACT Liquor Act to provide greater powers to the Minister and Commissioner to impose conditions on licenced premises.

Those powers would grant ACT Policing the ability to enforce on-the-spot 24 hour closures, stricter management plans for venues and the cancellation of extending trading.

Mr Thorn has urged the Attorney-General, Simon Corbell and the ACT Government to use this consultation as an opportunity to improve and strengthen the Liquor Act.

“In strengthening the ACT Liquor Act, the ACT Government has the opportunity to ensure that it becomes a leader on alcohol policy reform. NAAPA looks forward to continuing to work closely with the ACT Government to ensure the legislation best protects the people of Canberra and its surrounding region from the harms from alcohol,” Mr Thorn said.

Michael 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.