



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Media Release

QLD ALCOHOL HARMS SKYROCKET

18 July 2013: A new study examining alcohol-related harms in Queensland has identified an alarming increase in hospitalisations, hospital emergency department presentations and treatment episodes.

In 2012, alcohol was responsible for 91,783 hospital emergency department presentations, an increase of 31 per cent from five years before.

Alcohol related hospitalisations rose 57 per cent to 33,977 in the ten years ending 2011-12 while alcohol treatment episodes increased 45 per cent over six years.

The study of previously unreleased data by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) comes after recent moves by the Queensland Government to weaken existing regulation of alcohol.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn, who will today present at the Australian Winter School Conference in Brisbane, says it is extremely troubling that the Government continues to flag its intentions to further undermine existing alcohol policy measures in light of such damning evidence.

“In the face of rising alcohol harms, you would imagine this Government would look to ways to strengthen the existing measures that serve to protect and ensure public safety. Instead we have a Government in retreat on this issue, seemingly blind to the true extent of alcohol harms in the State and lacking the courage to put the public’s welfare ahead of the alcohol industry,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn stresses that the available Queensland alcohol harms data do not fully capture the true extent of the problem because the State does not collect data on alcohol violence.

“These disturbing alcohol harm figures are just the tip of the iceberg. The data does not include figures for incidents of alcohol-related violence and nor does it include hospitalisations as a result of alcohol-fuelled violence. Those on the frontline will tell you however that alcohol-fuelled violence results in a major additional burden on the State’s hospital system,” Mr Thorn said.

Two harm indicators; drink driving fatalities and drink driving hospitalisations, decreased by 44 per cent and 3 per cent respectively over the 10 years to 2012.

Far from being an anomaly, Michael Thorn says those findings demonstrate that effective and comprehensive evidence-based measures can result in meaningful change.

“In Queensland, governments took a comprehensive approach to reducing the State’s road toll. Random breath testing and penalties, together with regulation and awareness raising resulted in a substantial reduction in harms. The Queensland Government now needs to apply the same genuine commitment to tackling alcohol harms more generally if it wishes to see a similar reduction in harms,” Mr Thorn said.

Key Findings

- In 2011-12 there were 33,977 alcohol-related hospitalisations in Queensland, representing an increase of 57 per cent, from 21,625 in 2002-03.
- In 2012 there were 91,783 alcohol-related emergency department presentations in Queensland, representing an increase of 31 per cent, from 70,170 in 2007.
- In 2010-11 there were 9,772 alcohol treatment episodes where alcohol was the principal drug of concern in Queensland, representing an increase of 45 per cent from 6,740 in 2005-06.
- In 2012 there were 45 drink driving road fatalities in Queensland, representing a decrease of 44 per cent from 80 in 2003. Drink driving fatalities increased between 2003 and 2007 and declined from 2007 to 2012.
- In 2012 there were 562 drink driving hospitalisations in Queensland, representing a decrease of three per cent from 582 in 2003. Drink driving hospitalisations increased between 2003 and 2008 and declined from 2007 to 2012.

Michael Thorn is available for interview.

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Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) 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 its national grants program and commissioned research, FARE has established itself as a leading voice on alcohol and other drugs issues. FARE works 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 FARE’s website: www.fare.org.au