

## Media Release

# WA SCOOPS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL HEALTH SCHOLARSHIP

**30 October 2013:** Western Australia has dominated this year's prestigious Ian Webster Scholarship, with two of the State's brightest up and coming health professionals recognised for their long-term commitment to the Alcohol and other Drug (AoD) sector.

Tom Shalders, Don't Drink and Drown Coordinator with the Royal Life Saving Society WA, attended the World Conference on Drowning Prevention in Potsdam, Germany earlier this month, while, Julia Stafford, Executive Officer with Professor Mike Daube's McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, will interview leaders in the AoD sector, both in Australia and overseas to further her understanding of alcohol advocacy.

Now in its second year, the Ian Webster Scholarship aims to build leadership and management capacity in the AOD sector, and pays tribute to one of the sector's leading lights, Emeritus Professor Ian Webster.

Mr Shalders says the Scholarship gave him a valuable opportunity to learn from the world's leading researchers and project officers on how best to work with young people.

"Presenting at the World Conference was a unique opportunity to demonstrate the success Australia is having working with young people both on alcohol issues and drowning prevention, while the information and insights I received from my international counterparts will be pivotal in shaping the way the Royal Life Saving Society WA works with young people," Mr Shalders said.

For Ms Stafford, the scholarship will allow her to meet and interview a range of leading advocates, who have been recognised for their work in addressing alcohol and other public health issues.

Ms Stafford says there is enormous potential to learn from real-world applications of advocacy.

"I intend to use this opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of advocacy strategies that can be applied to alcohol issues in Australia and I look forward to sharing my advocacy-focused scholarship research with others in the AOD sector who are also excited to contribute to the work being done to prevent harm," Ms Stafford said

The Scholarship recognises Professor Webster’s contributions to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) since 2001, as well as the exceptional leadership he continues to demonstrate in his work throughout the not-for-profit sector, and in his various advisory roles to government.

It is the first time more than one scholarship has been awarded.

At today’s announcement, FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn congratulated Mr Shalders and Ms Stafford.

“Each year, the Ian Webster Scholarship represents a valuable opportunity to encourage the growth and development of the people who will lead the alcohol and drug sector into the future. This year the scholarship program identified not one, but two most worthy recipients. Ms Stafford and Mr Shalders’ dedication and passion to the sector exemplifies the very leadership and commitment so crucial to the success of the sector into the future,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says awarding this scholarship every year is the perfect way to commemorate Professor Webster’s contribution to the AOD sector.

“Professor Webster’s contribution to the AOD sector will not be forgotten and neither will the tireless work he has done to raise awareness about alcohol harms in Australia,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says Western Australia continues to lead the public health sector.

“It comes as no surprise to see such outstanding young leaders emerging from Western Australia; a State with such a proud record of achievement in public health,” Mr Thorn said.

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**Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** 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 [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au)