



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

ACT: RISKY DRINKING SEES ALCOHOL HARMS RISE

17 September 2015: Canberrans are drinking more and at riskier levels on a single occasion than the national average.

Alcohol harms are also on the increase, with over 6,700 alcohol-related emergency department presentations in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) each year.

Those findings have been highlighted by the NSW and ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) submission to the *ACT Liquor ACT Issues paper: Addressing alcohol-related harm*.

Bucking national trends, the ACT has recorded a slight rise in daily drinking from 5.4 per cent in 2010 to 6.6 per cent in 2013, this is despite daily drinking decreasing nationally.

Of greater concern, the proportion of ACT residents drinking at a level that places them at risk of long-term harm is 22 per cent compared to only 18.2 per cent nationally.

The proportion of males and females drinking at risky levels on a single occasion (more than 4 standard drinks) is also higher in the ACT than the national average; at 55.2 per cent for men compared with 48.2 percent nationally, and 33.5 percent for women compared to 27.6 per cent nationally

Those drinking patterns are reflected in the significant and escalating alcohol harms in the Territory.

Over a four year period there has been a 32 per cent increase in the number of alcohol-related emergency department presentations, from 5,084 in 2009-10 to 6,702 in 2012-13.

Across that same period there have been significant numbers of alcohol-related offences reported by police with an average of 85 such offences recorded across the ACT each month between 2010 and September 2013.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says the alarming consumption and harms data makes clear that there is still much work to do in the ACT.

“Anyone who questions the extent of alcohol harms in the ACT need only spend time in the emergency department to witness first-hand its devastating impact and the lives destroyed. Alcohol harms are extensive and occurring all too frequently in the ACT. On average there are 18 people presenting to Canberra’s Emergency Departments every day, and we can and must do more to reduce these numbers,” Mr Thorn said.

NAAPA’s submission includes a total of 18 recommendations, but stresses that any comprehensive reform of the Liquor ACT 2010 must begin with a reduction in late night trading hours, action to address reckless discounting and promotion in both on- and off-licence venues as well as measures governing and controlling outlet density.



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Mr Thorn, says he recognises and welcomes the ACT Government's changes to date to address alcohol harms, including the introduction of secondary supply laws and the strengthening of the membership of the Liquor Advisory Board, but warns that much more work remains to be done.

"Alcohol harms in the ACT are extensive and on the rise, driven by increased availability, excessive promotion and cheap booze. If the government is sincere and genuine about reducing those harms then it must introduce a 3am close and a 1am lockout for on-licence venues and a 10pm close for packaged liquor, and crackdown on reckless promotions that currently sees alcohol sold for less than a dollar per standard drink," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says there is strong support for the ACT Government to act.

"The data tells us we must act to reduce alcohol harms in the ACT, the evidence is clear on what we must do, and the latest data from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey informs us that these reforms are welcome. Over two thirds of ACT residents support reducing the numbers of outlets that sell alcohol and 61.7 per cent of the ACT residents support a reduction in late night trading at on-licence premises," Mr Thorn said.

Michael Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) is available for interview.

Media contact:

Amy Smith	0422 385 240
Jeremy Henderson	0425 559 710

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.