



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

GRANT'S MOVE ON LIQUOR LAWS WILL SILENCE COMMUNITY OPPOSITION

08 November 2015: Attempts by the New South Wales Government to make sweeping changes to the liquor regulation system under the false guise of 'empowering communities', have been slammed by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE).

The proposed changes, due to be introduced into the NSW Upper House on Tuesday, threaten to increase the number of high-risk bottleshops, pubs and late-trading outlets, diminish further communities input in the decision making process, and replace regulatory independence with new Ministerial influence.

There is clear evidence to show increases in alcohol's availability at both on- and off-licence increases domestic and non-domestic assault numbers and hospital emergency department presentations.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn is concerned the Government is wavering in its commitment to reduce alcohol harms, and has called on the Labor Party to oppose the Bill.

"The current regulatory system is already flawed and weighed heavily in favour of the alcohol industry. Just witness the current struggle by the Casula community opposed to the development of a hotel and pub just 135 metres from a major primary school. It's already very much an unfair fight, yet changes being driven by Deputy Premier, Troy Grant will essentially gag not just the citizens of Casula, but the people in communities throughout New South Wales who oppose alcohol outlets which threaten the safety of their towns and communities," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says the possibility of ministerial influence will compromise the regulatory independence of NSW liquor licensing system.

"By reducing the standing of the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority (ILGA), the Government, in one fell swoop introduces the risk of political interference, prejudicial ministerial direction and undue influence in licensing matters - the very things first remedied by the creation of ILGA in 2007," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn points to the alcohol industry's input into the Draft Liquor Promotion Guidelines in 2013 as just one of numerous examples where the liquor industry has already been able to unfairly influence the regulatory process and says it is critical that the system is not weakened further.

FARE has also raised concerns at the haste and the way in which the proposed changes are being rushed through Parliament, as well as the complete lack of community consultation.



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

The Gaming and Liquor Administration Amendment Bill 2015 was not assessed by the Legislation Review Committee, nor was a regulatory impact statement prepared by the Department. In addition there are reports of the transfer of ILGA staff to the Department of Justice before the amendment Bill has passed.

Mr Thorn says that that the Government has not consulted widely on the proposed changes, the only consultation to date was in fact a stakeholder briefing held by the Deputy Premier on 7 October at which neither the Bill nor its contents were raised. Claims to the contrary are false.

“Up until now, the people of New South Wales have come to expect and to enjoy an open and consultative Government under Premier Baird’s progressive leadership. It is surprising and disappointing that on this issue the Government now seems hell bent on turning away from its commitment to reduce alcohol harms, and I would today urge Premier Baird to reconsider” 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.