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ALCOHOL SPORTS SPONSORSHIP LINKED TO RISKY DRINKING

25 February 2016: A study released today has found a significant association between alcohol sports sponsorship and risky drinking among schoolchildren and adult athletes.

Published in the journal *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, this systematic review combines evidence from Australasia and other regions to examine the impact of exposure to alcohol sports sponsorship on drinking attitudes and behaviours.

Seven studies were included in the analysis which presents findings from 12,760 people in high income countries including the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The studies assessed all indicated the link between exposure to alcohol sponsor messages through sport and increased levels of alcohol consumption and risky drinking among schoolchildren and sportspeople.

University sportspeople in New South Wales, Australia, and athletes in sports clubs in New Zealand receiving alcohol industry sponsorship reported significantly higher rates of hazardous drinking than their sporting peers who weren't sponsored by alcohol brands.

In the United Kingdom, awareness of alcohol sports sponsorship among schoolchildren aged between 14 and 15 was linked to a 17 per cent higher chance of boys, and 13 per cent higher chance of girls, getting drunk at the weekend.

The report also includes a study of schoolchildren aged 13-14 from four European Union countries which found exposure to alcohol sports sponsorship through viewing a major football tournament was linked to 70 per cent increased chance of underage drinking.

The report's author, Katherine Brown, is Director of the Institute of Alcohol Studies located in London. She said:

"It is of great concern to see that sport, which should be viewed as a healthy, family friendly activity, is potentially putting our children and athletes at risk due to sponsorship deals with alcohol companies. Major alcohol brands are prominent in almost every high profile sporting event today, exposing millions of children to advertising and building positive associations that could be damaging in the long term," says Ms Brown.

"There is strong evidence that exposure to alcohol marketing leads young people to drink at an earlier age and to drink more if they already do so. This is why the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and World Health Organization have called on governments to investigate the introduction of alcohol advertising bans."

Michael Thorn, Chief Executive of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education in Australia, warned that millions of children across the nation, and around the world, are consuming these positive drinking messages while innocently following their favourite teams and tournaments.

“Sport should be an opportunity to motivate healthy positive behaviours among the younger generations not more drinking, and our children deserve to be inspired by sporting role models instead of walking, talking alcohol billboards.”

Mr Thorn says Australia is starting to see some positive efforts at the grassroots community level. As part of the Good Sports initiative, in the New South Wales far west, the Wilcannia Boomerangs and Parntu Warriors Rugby League Club recently held an [alcohol free community cricket day](#).

“Community-led efforts are important and should be applauded, but ultimately we need to see our professional sporting codes at the state and territory and the national levels step up and put an end to the promotion of alcohol and sport. We know from our national polling that there is a huge level of concern about about the promotion and linkage of sport and alcohol and its time Australia’s major sporting codes fell into line with those community attitudes and expectations,” Mr Thorn said.

ENDS

Michael Thorn and Katherine Brown are available for interview.

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[View the open access report online.](#)

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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. 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. For more information visit www.fare.org.au

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