



GOVERNMENTS URGED TO ACT ON ALCOHOL-RELATED FAMILY VIOLENCE

17 June 2015: Commonwealth, state and territory governments must accept that alcohol is implicated in too much of Australia's family violence and urgently implement measures that would prevent and reduce this violence.

Launching a new national plan to prevent alcohol-related family violence Rosie Batty, 2015 Australian of the Year and Founder of the Luke Batty Foundation, will today tell the Prime Minister that Australia cannot afford to wait decades for generational change and instead must act now.

Alcohol is involved in up to 65 per cent of family violence incidents reported to police and up to 47 per cent of child abuse cases in Australia. Alcohol was also consumed by the perpetrator in more than a third of intimate partner homicides. Yet to date, government plans have either not adequately acknowledged alcohol's involvement in family violence, or have failed to embrace strategies to address the issue.

The *National framework for action to prevent alcohol-related family violence*, developed by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and launched at Parliament House in Canberra today, aims to remedy that; proposing policies and programs that all Australian governments can implement which will have a tangible impact on reducing and preventing family violence.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says that only by focusing efforts on prevention and acknowledging alcohol's role in this violence can governments seriously address this issue in Australia.

"For too long now governments haven't given enough attention to preventing family violence. Getting serious about prevention is about saying as a nation that we are no longer going to accept the inevitability of these atrocities; that we're going to take determined steps to stop family violence before it happens. That's the first step. But the next step, if governments are sincere, is to recognise the elephant in the room; to acknowledge the role of alcohol and to embrace evidence-based solutions to address it," Mr Thorn said.

With a strong emphasis on stopping violence before it happens, the Framework contains four priority areas for action and a total of 20 action areas, and is the culmination of nine months of gathering the evidence and consulting with professionals with expertise in public health, child protection and family violence.

The Framework's priority is to prevent alcohol-related family violence across the whole community. Recognising the well-established links between the availability of alcohol and alcohol-related violence, it proposes actions to reduce the physical availability of alcohol including introducing more stringent controls on liquor licence approval processes, restrictions on trading hours, licensing freeze or buybacks in areas saturated with liquor licences and the termination of all 24 hour liquor licences.



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The Framework also recommends the introduction of a levy on alcohol products to pay for the costs incurred by government in responding to family violence. Reforming the way alcohol is taxed and introducing a levy would result in reductions in consumption and harm.

Mr Thorn says tough problems require tough solutions.

“Alcohol’s involvement in family violence is undeniable. Australian governments must acknowledge the vast research and the irrefutable evidence that clearly links the availability of alcohol with family violence; and act accordingly. In practice that means putting public interests ahead of the alcohol industry and being prepared to say no to liquor licence applications that put people at greater risk of harm. As a nation, we must be ready to demand that they do,” Mr Thorn said.

At a time when there is significant uncertainty surrounding Commonwealth Government funding for family violence services, the Framework also calls for longer term, sustained funding for the sector, and a shared Model of Care between alcohol and other drug services, mental health services, family violence services, and child protection services; a ‘no wrong door’ approach that would ensure those in need and those at risk receive the best care and protection.

The Framework also recommends the introduction of innovative programs for perpetrators of family violence that specifically aim to change their behaviours, including a court-based sobriety program modelled on the South Dakota 24/7 model for alcohol-related offences, which required offenders to undergo two breath tests per day or wear a continuous alcohol monitoring bracelet as part of their probation requirements.

Endorsing the Framework today, Ms Batty said that for too long solutions have been missing from the debate on family violence, and called on the Prime Minister Tony Abbott, Opposition Leader the Hon Bill Shorten and Greens Leader Senator Richard Di Natale to move from discussion to determined and informed action.

“There is not, and can never be an acceptable level of family violence. Prevention must be our ultimate goal and we must do everything in our power to stop it. The Framework provides us with such a roadmap, a complete and balanced package of measures that recognise the importance of prevention while not abandoning the absolute necessity that governments continue to support those already affected and assist and protect those most vulnerable,” Ms Batty said.

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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.