



## 2013 NSW ALCOHOL SUMMIT

### COMMUNIQUE

14 March 2013

The NSW and ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) hosted the *2013 NSW Alcohol Summit* at Parliament House in Sydney today, bringing together health professionals, community representatives, law enforcement officials, researchers, frontline workers and State politicians.

Ten years on from the *2003 NSW Summit on Alcohol Abuse*, alcohol is more affordable than it has been in three decades and more widely available. Against a backdrop of rising alcohol harms, and heightened community concerns, today's Summit examined the lessons learnt and, with an eye to the future, the opportunities available to introduce effective alcohol-control policy reform.

With the full knowledge that there are proven ways of reducing alcohol harms that plague the State, and with an understanding of the extent and magnitude of the problem, the cost to individuals, families, and communities, NSW can ill afford another lost decade.

Key indicators illustrate how alcohol harms are increasing. Alcohol-attributable hospitalisations in NSW have increased by 37 per cent over the last 10 years to 49,409 (2010/11), while reported alcohol-related assaults in NSW have increased by 17 per cent to 26,038 (2011/12). Coupled with an increase in outlet numbers and trading hours, NSW has witnessed a chronic failure of the alcohol-control regime to minimise and prevent alcohol-related harm.

We do not want another ten years to pass without any meaningful government action.

Today's Summit highlighted the measures proven most effective in tackling the State's alcohol problem and the need for Government to develop alcohol control policies independent of the alcohol industry. There is a strong consensus in the evidence about preventing alcohol-related problems regarding what works and what doesn't work.

Successive NSW Governments have not done enough to address the availability, price and promotion of alcohol and have failed to provide community members with the ability to influence liquor licencing processes.

The NSW Government must embrace proven, evidence-based policies to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms and not be influenced by the alcohol industry in the development of alcohol control policies. It cannot continue to ignore these effective prevention measures and continue to support measures known to be ineffective.

NAAPA calls on the Government to address the increased availability of alcohol and resulting increased alcohol-related harms and recommends the:

- Introduction of a 3am common closing time and 1am lock out for all late trading pubs and clubs across NSW, modelled on the successful Newcastle intervention.

- Establishment and enforcement of 'saturation zones' which impose limitations on the provision of new licenses in areas that are identified as already having large numbers of licensed premises.
- Introduction of 'cumulative impact' and 'cluster control' policies which prohibit new licenses from being granted within a specified distance of existing licensed premises.
- A moratorium that prevents trading after midnight for all new liquor licenses (including small bars) and existing licenses seeking extensions.

NAAPA calls on the Government to ensure bottle shops, pubs, clubs and other liquor outlets do not recklessly promote discounted products that encourage the excessive consumption of alcohol, and calls for legislation that would:

- Prohibit the harmful discounting and promotion of alcohol products at on-licence and off-licence premises, and ensure these measures are enforced.
- Prohibit the sale of shots, mixed drinks with more than 30mL of alcohol and ready mixed drinks stronger than five per cent alcohol by volume after 10pm at on-licence premises.
- Prohibit the sale of more than four drinks to any person at one time and implement and enforce a requirement to provide free water stations at every on-licensed premise.
- Prohibit the sale of alcohol mixed with energy drinks after midnight at on-licence premises.

Lastly, NAAPA calls on Premier O'Farrell to ensure that the general public and people working in areas directly impacted by the dangerous oversupply of alcohol are given a real voice and have the opportunity to comment on and raise concerns regarding applications for new premises or variations to existing licences, and recommends:

- Greater opportunities for all people to engage with consultation processes for new liquor licenses or variations of licenses.
- Establishment of a service to support people and organisations that wish to raise concerns regarding new liquor licenses or changes to licenses.

This year, the five year statutory review of the *Liquor Act 2007* provides the NSW Government with an historic opportunity to conduct a thorough and exhaustive review of this important legislation. Due to be conducted and tabled in Parliament by December 2013, NAAPA calls on the NSW Government to commence the process immediately.

NAAPA also urges the NSW Government to ensure the appointment of independent members to the review panel, to demonstrate a commitment to genuine open public consultation, and most importantly, to prioritise harm minimisation ahead of vested alcohol industry interests.

Ten years on from the 2003 Alcohol Summit, NAAPA calls on the Government to acknowledge the rising alcohol-related harms in our communities, to acknowledge the failure of existing policies to reduce those harms and to embrace evidence-based responses guaranteed to reduce alcohol-related harms and improve the lives, health and safety of all the people of NSW.

