



MEDIA RELEASE

ALCOHOL DEATHS: COUNTRY NSW HIT HARDEST BUT RESIDENTS ARE THE LEAST PROTECTED

9 January 2019: Life in drought-affected NSW is tough going, where the harms from alcohol misuse cause deep-level tragedy for people living in regional, rural and remote communities.

The NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) has put alcohol-fuelled harm on the 2019 NSW election agenda; revealing the toll from alcohol is far worse outside metropolitan areas than in renowned city hotspots and calling for earlier closing times in major regional centres.

“Regional, rural and remote communities experience disproportionate levels of alcohol harm, with domestic assaults 12-times higher in rural and remote regions compared to NSW as a whole,” said NAAPA spokesperson Tony Brown, from Newcastle University.

“And the big killer in rural NSW is motor vehicle accidents, where alcohol is a factor in 85 per cent of crash fatalities compared to 17 per cent in major cities,” Mr Brown said.

Through NAAPA, emergency workers, health professionals, community members, community sector workers, researchers and advocates have come together to develop an Election Platform to make the whole of NSW safer and healthier.

NAAPA is calling on the next NSW Parliament to acknowledge and prioritise the prevention and sustained reduction of alcohol-related harm and associated costs in regional, rural and remote NSW.

“The NSW Government’s ‘earlier last drinks’ and ‘one-way door’ measures introduced in 2014 have been powerful and effective in reducing harms in prominent nightlife precincts in Sydney and Newcastle,” Mr Brown said.

NAAPA states that communities in regional, rural and remote NSW should not be deprived of similar measures proven to reduce alcohol-related harm.

“These measures must now be rolled out state-wide to deal with hotspots of alcohol-fuelled violence in other areas – including Byron Bay, Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Albury and Wagga Wagga – where there are concentrations of late-trading pubs, clubs and bottle shops,” he said.

Another achievable policy reform proposed by NAAPA addresses the rapidly growing online alcohol market, which, according to IBIS world, is expanding at the rate of 11 per cent per year.

Chief Executive of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Michael Thorn says there are more than 500 online-only/delivery liquor outlets, which is a 10-fold increase in the past decade,” Mr Thorn said.



“This burgeoning market is under-regulated around responsible service of alcohol (RSA) and proof of age controls, making it easier for underage and intoxicated people to access alcohol, leading to more harm to drinkers and those around them,” he said.

To strengthen the regulation of the online alcohol market NAAPA proposes a moratorium on all online liquor licences pending a review of the online, home delivery market; the strengthening of RSA conditions for online deliveries that would require companies to display licence details on websites selling alcohol; and the introduction of a 12-hour delay on the delivery of online orders.

Mr Thorn said the cost to NSW taxpayers to respond to alcohol-related harm runs to billions of dollars every year, but this can be reduced with sensible evidence-based policy interventions.

“Our political leaders have an opportunity to demonstrate strong and resolute leadership and tilt the balance back into the favour of the people of NSW and not the alcohol industry,” he said.

Tony Brown and Michael Thorn are both available for interview.

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