

MEDIA RELEASE

National Alliance for Action on Alcohol supports Senate Inquiry into alcohol-related violence

3 February 2016:

The National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA) has backed calls by Senator Glenn Lazarus for an Inquiry into alcohol-related violence, saying that the Government can no longer ignore the need for decisive action to tackle the alcohol-related harms afflicting local communities across Australia.

However, NAAA co-chair Dr John Crozier has urged the Inquiry to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the range of alcohol-related harms and the underlying drivers of these harms.

“The reality is that the devastating toll of alcohol isn’t just confined to our city streets on a Saturday night, and we are seeing increasing death, disability, health service burden and social impacts of alcohol across Australia. The Inquiry needs to take a comprehensive approach that focuses on the underlying drivers of these harms, including the price, availability and advertising of alcohol,” said Dr Crozier.

Dr Crozier, who is also Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Trauma Committee, said surgeons and front-line medical staff are confronted with the effects of alcohol misuse daily, treating patients with injuries resulting from road traffic trauma, interpersonal violence and personal accidents that are caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

Senator Lazarus has called upon the Federal Government to show leadership and to work in partnership with all states and territories in developing a national strategy to address the issue.

“While states and territories have introduced some important reforms, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and coordinated response at a national level,” said Michael Moore, NAAA co-chair and CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia.

“Australia has not had a stand-alone national alcohol strategy since 2011, and the 2014 National Alcohol Policy Scorecard rated the Federal Government as the lowest performing of all the jurisdictions in terms of its efforts to develop and implement evidence-based alcohol policy, mainly due to the absence of a whole-of-government strategic plan to address alcohol-related harm.

“Despite growing community concerns and numerous reviews and reports calling for policy action at a Federal level, we are yet to see alcohol taxation reforms, meaningful regulation of alcohol marketing, or mandatory labelling of alcohol products.

“At the same time, the Government has dismantled key advisory groups including the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), the Australian National Preventative Health Agency (ANHPA), the Drug and Alcohol Prevention and Treatment Advisory Committee, and the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC),” said Mr Moore.

The call for a Senate Inquiry coincides with a Galaxy poll, released yesterday, which shows 80 per cent of Queenslanders believe governments need to do more to address alcohol-related harms. It also follows research, released last week by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, which showed that one in seven patients attending Australian emergency departments on Australia Day were there as a result of alcohol harm.

“The devastating effects of excess alcohol use are comprehensive, and their prevalence is far-reaching; the Government’s approach to this issue must be equally comprehensive and far-reaching if it is to be effective,” Mr Moore said.

“We need a comprehensive and coordinated approach to make a national difference. Political leadership and policy action at a national level is vital, and a comprehensive Inquiry will provide an opportunity to examine the evidence and galvanise a whole-of-government response”.

ENDS

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About the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol:

The National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA) is a national coalition representing more than 90 organisations from across Australia. NAAA’s members cover a diverse range of interests, including public health, law enforcement, local government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, child and adolescent health, and family and community services.

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