MEDIA RELEASE

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Community leaders call on NT Government to keep alcohol harm reduction measures in place

In an open letter sent to the Hon Lia Finocchiaro, Chief Minster of the Northern Territory (NT) today, more than 200 community leaders and representatives from community, health, Aboriginal and research organisations have called on the NT Government to keep in place measures that work to reduce alcohol-related harm.

This includes retaining evidence-based harm minimisation policies, such as the Minimum Unit Price for a standard drink (or floor price) on alcohol and reduced trading hours for take-away liquor outlets.

Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) Chief Executive, Dr John Paterson said, “Grog is something that hurts too many Territorians, and our government should be using every tool in the toolkit to keep people in our community safe and well.

“Our message to the Chief Minister is clear: please listen to us and consult with communities who have experienced the damaging effects of alcohol firsthand.

“We know all too well what happens when decisions are made without community engagement and consideration of the evidence. We can’t afford to take any backwards steps on alcohol.”

Association of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies Northern Territory (AADANT) Executive Officer Stephanie Holmes said, "We’re calling on the Government to put Territorians’ health first by maintaining alcohol policies that are proven to reduce harm and help make our communities safer.

“Measures that prevent unfettered access to alcohol, including the Minimum Unit Price and shorter take-away hours, reduce harm and save lives.”

From July 2022 to early 2023, restricted area legislative provisions were allowed to lapse across the NT despite warnings from community leaders of the increased harm that would result.

There was, as predicted, a very significant increase[1] in violence and other harm, especially to women.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) CEO Caterina Giorgi said, "Just a few weeks ago following a National Cabinet meeting, every Chief Minister and Premier in Australia acknowledged the role that systems and industries play in exacerbating violence.

"They also made a commitment to review their alcohol laws, and their impact on family and domestic violence victims in order to identify and share best practice and reforms.

"Removing alcohol harm reduction measures will only increase harm. It will not make women and children in the Northern Territory safer."

Signatories to the open letter include:

- Dr John Paterson, Chief Executive, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
- Stephanie Holmes, Executive Officer, Association of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies Northern Territory
- Dr Donna Ah Chee, Chief Executive Officer, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
- Dr John Boffa, People's Alcohol Action Coalition Alice Springs NT
- Sally Sievers, Chief Executive Officer, Northern Territory Council of Social Service
- Michael Rotumah, Chief Executive Officer, Larrakia Nation
- Rob McPhee, Chief Executive Officer, Danila Dilba Health Service
- A/Professor Robert Parker, President, Australian Medical Association NT Council
- Darryl Coulstock, Chief Executive Officer, Ampilatwatja Health Centre Aboriginal Corporation
- Melissa Hinson, Chief Executive Officer, Urapuntja Health Service
- Caterina Giorgi, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.

Open letter: www.fare.org.au/nt-open-letter/

Media contact: Joanna Le | media@fare.org.au | 0402 265 145

Media outlets are requested to promote help-seeking information when reporting on alcohol and other drugs, in line with the Mindframe National Guidelines. **Suggested wording relating this this media story:** *If you or someone you know needs support, please call Lifeline 13 11 14, 13YARN 13 92 76, the National 24/7 Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline 1800 250 015 or 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732.*

[1] Alcohol Policy and Alcohol related harm in Alice Springs - Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (caac.org.au)