

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21

Prepared by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)

FARE welcomes the opportunity to provide a pre-budget submission for the 2020-21 Australian Government Budget. Alcohol is a causal factor in over 200 disease and injury conditions. The cancer risk of consuming a bottle of wine is equivalent to smoking ten cigarettes for women and five cigarettes for men.¹ However, awareness of the long-term harms of alcohol use is low among the general population.

FARE proposes a national awareness campaign to promote the Australian guidelines (the Guidelines) to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol and reduce rates of chronic disease in Australia.

The Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol

Ten years after the release of the Guidelines, most Australians remain unaware of the low-risk levels. Only 21.1 per cent of men and 14.9 per cent of women can accurately name the correct limit for low-risk limits for long-term harm (<2 drinks per day).²

On 16 December 2019, the new draft Guidelines were released. The draft Guidelines make a significant shift from a daily to weekly recommendation for long-term harm. Draft Guideline One recommends no more than ten standard drinks per week and no more than four standard drinks on any one occasion.³ The Guidelines are expected to be finalised and official by third quarter 2020. In order to avoid the current situation, it is critical that an awareness campaign be undertaken to inform consumers about the Guidelines and the long-term risks of alcohol consumption.

This awareness campaign should form a key component of the National Preventive Health Strategy as announced by Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP in June 2019.⁴

Why use public education

Public awareness campaigns are one way to challenge and change social norms.⁵ The World Health Organization explains that social norms are unspoken rules or expectations within societies about appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. These norms persist because of individuals' desire to conform, as well as expectations by others that people will conform.⁶ Public education campaigns have been most successfully used in the tobacco control field, where social norms about the acceptability of smoking have changed dramatically. Research from the tobacco control field has found that public education campaigns are most successful when they are well-funded, repetitive, and ongoing.⁷

What public education on long-term alcohol harm can achieve

A public education campaign needs to be multifaceted and use a range of media to promote key messages. This includes traditional media (press, television and radio) and digital media. The campaign rationale must identify and elicit the behaviour change sought.⁸ The campaign should be reinforced in multiple settings and through formal messaging, such as through public transport and on television, and

be supported by health and medical professionals.

The campaign should highlight the contribution of alcohol consumption to long-term harms such as heart disease, stroke, cirrhosis and cancer. It should use evidence-based messages, tested with a range of consumers and targeted to the adult Australian population.

Project governance

Management and development of the campaign will be coordinated by FARE and overseen by a project control group. This group will include experts in research and evaluation, social marketing, behaviour change, advertisers and health and medical colleges, to ensure the campaign is supported by health professionals.

Budget

ITEM	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
Comprehensive public education campaign	\$15,000,000	\$45,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$90,000,000

References

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