

## Media Release

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### NSW ALCOHOL THREAT HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

**Wednesday 20 March 2019:** Ahead of Saturday's NSW election, the major parties are being reminded of the danger of failing to act decisively to address alcohol harm during the next political term.

Alcohol – the State's deadliest drug – is completely missing from the election drug debate, just one week after NSW was judged the nation's worst performing jurisdiction on alcohol harm prevention.

In the first four weeks of the incoming NSW Government's first term, alcohol will be involved in 150 deaths in NSW, while only three people will die from methamphetamine drug use.

NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA) spokesperson, Dr John Crozier, who is Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Trauma Committee, says NAAPA is concerned that while the major parties are strongly posturing on drug policy, they remain weak and somewhat confused about the state's most harmful drug, alcohol.

"The parties seem to be caught up in releasing pledge after pledge to act arbitrarily on illegal substances, prescription drugs and pill testing, while continuing to fail in their duty of care to address the harm from alcohol," Dr Crozier said.

Dr Crozier says last week's announcement that NSW was awarded the ['Fizzer'](#) for its abject failure to protect NSW communities from alcohol harm, should serve as a wake-up call for the incoming NSW Government that it must do better.

"We see 137 hospitalisations a day for alcohol, compared to 14 methamphetamine-related, and similarly Emergency Department presentations for alcohol are 38 per day compared to 12," Dr Crozier said.

"Whether you look at consumption data, hospital admissions or emergency presentations, it's inescapable that alcohol is the number one drug issue requiring strong commitments and funding," he said.

Last month NAAPA wrote to the leaders of the major NSW political parties asking for their stance on five key alcohol policy initiatives.

Responses were received from the Liberal/National Coalition, the Australian Labor Party NSW Branch and Greens NSW.

The head of Research and Policy at the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Trish Hepworth, says while there are promising signs across the political spectrum of in-principle support for measures that would save lives in NSW, what is missing is a sign that an incoming government will decisively act on alcohol harm.



“Labor and the Coalition both expressed support for raising awareness of the harms from alcohol but neither party is willing to actually commit to fund an alcohol harm awareness campaign,” Ms Hepworth said.

Ms Hepworth says the in-coming Government risks letting NSW fall further behind the rest of the nation in addressing alcohol, which completely ignores community attitudes and expectations.

“More than 80 per cent of NSW adults believe they have the right to know about alcohol’s long-term harm and 77 per cent believe the government has a responsibility to educate them about those harms,” Ms Hepworth said.

**See the full report *NSW ELECTION 2019 ALCOHOL POLICY SCORECARD* attached.**

**View the Fizzer Awards [2018 ALCOHOL POLICY SCORECARD Benchmarking Australian state and territory governments’ progress towards preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm](#)**

**Dr Crozier and Ms Hepworth are available for comment.**

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