

MEDIA RELEASE

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Health experts call for state-wide review of closing hours

The Alcohol Policy Coalition (APC) today commended the Victorian Government's new Chapel Street planning reforms, which include limits on new late-night licenses in the area. The APC called for a state-wide review of closing hours for licensed premises.

"The peak hours for alcohol-related casualties are between midnight and 6am on weekend nights, as shown in the ambulance attendance data", said Professor Robin Room, Director for the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre. "Research shows that with extended trading hours of licensed outlets, there is a direct increase of alcohol-related problems in the community."

"The Victorian community is concerned about unrestricted availability of alcohol, such as 24-hour bottle shops and late night venues. Melbourne is a 24hour city so it's natural for people to be out late at night, but late-night activities should not be fuelled by alcohol – emergency doctors and nurses, the ambulance service, the police, and others who pick up the pieces all can tell of the tragic consequences."

"The APC proposes that nightclubs and other late-night venues should stop serving alcohol at 3am. They can stay open later, but without adding more alcohol to the mix. To avoid "preloading", "side-loading" and "post-loading", bottle-shops need to close at 11pm. We call for a state-wide review to consider these and other proposals for reducing the harm from late-night drinking."

An increasing number of people think that Australians have a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse (80%), up from 73% in 2010. And the majority of Australians (82%) believe that more needs to be done to address alcohol-related harms.ⁱ

"With every additional liquor shop, the rates of assault and chronic disease go up. This is particularly problematic because we know that most (75%) of the alcohol sold in Victoria comes from bottle shops or liquor barns."

The number of packaged liquor outlets in Victoria has more than doubled in the last two decades. Studies in Melbourne have shown that with a greater number of bottle shops, the surrounding community sees a rise in rates of street violence and alcohol-related chronic disease.

Alcohol remains a major cause of preventable death and illness across the state. It hospitalises 24,700 Victorians and kills more than 750 every year. Alcohol-related harms cost Victorian taxpayers more than \$4billion every year. This is something we have the power to prevent.

Alcohol-related harms to Victorians have increased dramatically in the last two decades as the number of alcohol stores has gone up. The number of drunken 16-17year olds presenting to emergency rooms has increased by 33% for males and 66% for females since 1999.

For media enquiries please contact Renee Lustman on 03 9278 8109 / 0430 948 380.

The Alcohol Policy Coalition (the Coalition) is a collaboration of health agencies – Australian Drug Foundation, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and VicHealth – with shared concern relating to the misuse of alcohol and its health/social impacts on the community. Alcohol remains one of the major causes of preventable death and illness in Australia. As such, the Coalition advocates for evidence based policy to prevent and reduce the harms caused by alcohol to Australians. For more information visit www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au

ⁱ FARE (Formerly AER Foundation) *Annual Alcohol Poll: Community Attitudes and Behaviours*, 2011.