

Media Release

AER FOUNDATION CHAIR, PROF IAN WEBSTER RETIRES

SCOTT WILSON APPOINTED CHAIR

CHERYL BART APPOINTED DEPUTY CHAIR

19 March 2009: The Chairman of the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AER), Professor Ian Webster AO, today announced his retirement from the role he has held for more than seven years. The AER Board has appointed former Deputy Chair, Mr Scott Wilson as new Chairman and Board Director Cheryl Bart, AO as Deputy Chair. (Please see page 3 for bios).

Both appointments are effective immediately, and Professor Webster will remain on the AER Board as a Director.

Professor Webster said he is proud of the achievements of the AER since its inception, but has decided it is time for a change of leadership.

“I have enjoyed my time as Chair of AER Foundation, but I am looking forward to new challenges in my life,” he said. “It’s a privilege to have worked so closely with such a committed team of AER Directors and staff developing evidence based programs, knowledge and policy to reduce the burden of alcohol related harms on all Australians, since the establishment of AER in 2001. There are few individuals in Australia as passionately committed to helping reduce the harms associated with alcohol consumption and volatile substance misuse as Scott Wilson. I very confidently pass the leadership baton to him as the organisation steps into its next phase,” he said. “As Deputy Chair, Cheryl Bart is a vastly experienced Board Director who brings a dynamic commercial perspective to our operations and provides an excellent complement to Scott’s public health and social welfare sector expertise.”

In the past seven years as Chairman of AER, Professor Webster has overseen the successful funding of over 950 funding projects covering 700 organisations around Australia, 30% of which are Indigenous. AER is committed to building capacity in the alcohol and

other drugs sector and has provided a framework for significant development and funding in the area. AER works closely with various Government, non-Government and community groups to ensure the knowledge, experience and resources in the alcohol sector are harnessed and capitalised to improve our nations' collective health.

"This is such an important time for Australia, with much focus on changing the way we drink. I am delighted we have seen such positive change in attitudes towards alcohol; though there is much to be done to see this new awareness shift into reduced outcomes in the area of risky drinking for our country," he said.

Prominent Aboriginal leader Scott Wilson said: "AER has benefited greatly from Ian's extensive knowledge, experience and leadership over the years, and I have personally learned a great deal from working closely with him. The new leadership team will continue to vigilantly ensure alcohol misuse in our country is acknowledged and addressed. Since its inception AER has had considerable success in raising the issues around alcohol misuse and we see the coming years as an opportunity to build on this.

"We will be looking at setting up a youth committee so we can be better informed and accurately target programs to suit this age group. AER will continue its focus on Indigenous issues around substance abuse in particular the areas of volatile substance abuse. One of AER focuses in the coming year will also be around maternal health and foetal alcohol syndrome and it was pleasing to see that the recently released NHMRC Standard Drinking Guidelines now includes zero consumption for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

AER will continue its work with all levels of government in helping address these and other social issues. We are also looking forward to having discussions with all relevant stakeholders to find ways that we can work together to ensure better outcomes for all involved.

Cheryl Bart said: "Alcohol issues are at a tipping point in Australia and in many countries around the world. AER has a crucial role to play in facilitating the introduction of key reforms and the provision of pivotal services and programs within the health and alcohol sector. Ian has been such a huge contributor to this area throughout his career, and I look forward to supporting Scott and the Board to continue his good work."

- Ends -

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About the Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation (AER): AER is a not-for-profit company established in 2001 with a mandate to 'change the way we drink'. AER was initially established with funding from a federal government grant and is now a perpetual trust. AER has built up a comprehensive understanding of the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector and is a leading grant giving body for community groups and programs within the alcohol sector. Through donations, grants and utilisation of the perpetual trust: AER seeks to prevent alcohol and licit substance abuse especially amongst disadvantaged, indigenous and young people; to support evidence-based treatment, research and prevention programs in the AOD sector; and to highlight the dangers of licit substance abuse and promote the responsible consumption of alcohol within the community. AER has funded more than 850 programs throughout Australia (30% of which are within the Indigenous community) including numerous programs which contribute to shifting community attitudes towards a responsible approach to alcohol consumption. For further information: <http://www.aerf.com.au>

About Ian Webster (former Chair):

Ian Webster is a consulting physician at Liverpool Hospital and in the Shoalhaven Area. He was honorary visiting physician to the Matthew Talbot Hostel for the Homeless from 1976 to 2007. He is Emeritus Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine in the University of New South Wales and Chief Patron of the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia. He chairs the National Advisory Council on Suicide Prevention, the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation Ltd., the New South Wales Expert Advisory Group on Alcohol and Drugs and is President, Governing Committee of the Ted Noffs Foundation. He is Chairperson of SHARE (Support for Health for All in our Region).

His research and publications have been in preventive medicine, medical practice, ageing, disability, homelessness, alcohol and other drug problems, suicide prevention and social issues in health.

Scott Wilson (newly appointed Chairman)

Scott Wilson was appointed a director of AER on 17 October 2001. Mr Wilson is the State Director of the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc, which is the only Indigenous organisation of its kind in Australia. Mr Wilson has presented a number of papers on behalf of ADAC at both national and international conferences on indigenous drug and alcohol issues and was awarded the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) Australia Day Achievement Medallion in 1997. In 2003, Mr Wilson was awarded the Centenary Medal for service to Indigenous substance misuse issues. Scott has just been announced as the Chair and also serves on the Audit, Executive, Policy and Remuneration committees. Mr Wilson has also served as a director of the Wine Foundation.

Cheryl Bart, AO (newly appointed Deputy Chair) BCom/LLB

Cheryl Bart was appointed a director of AER on 17 October 2001, and has served as Audit Chairman since 2001. Cheryl Bart is a lawyer and company director. She is the Chairman of the Environment Protection Authority, South Australian Film Corporation and the Adelaide Film Festival. Cheryl has just been announced as Deputy Chair. During the past year Ms Bart has also served as a director of the following other companies:

- Spark Infrastructure Ltd
- ANZ Trustees Ltd
- ETSA Utilities
- Economic Development Board
- South Australia Film Corporation
- Adelaide Film Festival
- Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund
- Shaw of Australia
- Growth Properties Ltd