

Media Release:

MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS SUPPORT AUSTRALIA DAY ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS

54% WOULD LIKE TO SEE ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS TO CURB VIOLENCE

58% OF FEMALES, 50% OF MALES WANT TO SEE ALCOHOL LIMITS

22nd January 2010: As Australians prepare to celebrate Australia Day this Tuesday January 26th, new research by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AER), Australia's leading alcohol harm minimisation body, indicates that more than half of Australians support alcohol restrictions for the public holiday to curb alcohol-related violence.

The majority (54%) of respondents support the initiative by Police in some areas to restrict the availability of alcohol sold in pubs and clubs to reduce alcohol-related violence, a figure equating to over four million Australians.** These are the first results from the annual AER attitudinal survey, a national online poll of more than 1,000 Australians over the age of 18 years. More results from the study will be released in the near future.

Evidence shows that restricting the availability of alcohol leads to a reduction in alcohol-related violence and assault in the surrounding area. This particular initiative was recommended by NSW Police on 11th January. Among the respondents, 58% of females and 50% of males support alcohol restrictions for the public holiday, 12% of the total weren't certain ("don't know") and just 34% opposed.

AER Chair Scott Wilson said these results confirm a changing culture in Australia towards more responsible alcohol consumption and urged alcohol retailers to consider abiding by the proposed alcohol limits.

"This current research indicates that Australians are willing to temporarily sacrifice the convenience of full alcohol availability so we can all enjoy the day responsibly and with minimal harm. We are certainly not advocating a full alcohol ban for Australia Day – many people enjoy a few drinks with family and friends on this public holiday. However, we support the NSW Police attempts to consider proactive measures which are proven to prevent alcohol-fuelled violence and urge alcohol outlets to heed public opinion on alcohol sales this Australia Day.

"Many of us have seen the everyday harmful effects of alcohol misuse and we don't want to disrupt Australia's national holiday by allowing a few irresponsible individuals to ruin the celebrations for the whole community," he added.

The alcohol restrictions, urged by NSW Police to pubs, clubs and bottle shops throughout the State, included a ban on the sale of full-strength (more than 4 percent) beer, wine and spirits before 2pm, along with a ban on shots and double shots and the sale of some drink brands with more than 5 percent alcohol after 9pm at pubs and clubs.

Outside of the proposed Australia Day bans, AER has previously supported the reduction of alcohol availability by advocating for restricting the number of licenses available, and reducing the density of licenses to reduce the impact of alcohol in certain areas. They also would like to see a reduction in trading hours and the banning of 24 hour trading licenses.

Mr Wilson also cited the continuing cost of alcohol on our society and burden of alcohol to others as rationale for supporting these alcohol restrictions on Australia.

“The annual \$15 billion health cost coupled with the social cost of alcohol remains a major problem for this country. Recent AER research demonstrates alcohol abuse is affecting not only the drinker, but loved ones, children, friends and co-workers. Our hospitals are becoming flooded with alcohol-related injuries and young people are drinking at dangerous levels,” said Wilson.

“Previous AER research has shown that 80 percent of Australians admit we have a national drinking problem.*** The support for alcohol restrictions on Australia Day is another example of the shift in attitudes to alcohol.

“Australia Day is a fitting time to assess what’s most important to us as a nation – a few extra drinks at the family barbeque or the health and safety of ourselves and loved ones?” said Mr Wilson

According to NSW Police, there were 92 arrests and 113 offences on Australia Day in 2009, compared with 30 arrests the year before.

- ends -

Media Contact: Kevin Burke 02 9492 1042 mb: 0415 945 869 e: Kevin@launchgroup.com.au
Amanda McGregor 02 9492 1004 mb: 0411 222 311 email: amanda@launchgroup.com.au

Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation (AER): The Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation (AER) is a unique, independent, not-for-profit organisation with a goal to *change the way we drink*. AER collaborates with grass-roots community organisations, all levels of government, Police, researchers and the private sector to turn evidence-based research on alcohol and solvent misuse into practical, real-life solutions. Since its inception in 2001, AER has invested over \$100 million in Prevention, Public Education, Workforce Development, and Treatment & Rehabilitation projects, underpinned by innovative research. Our dedication to creating a safer and healthier Australia sees AER forming new partnerships and alliances with like-minded organisations, with a focus on youth and Indigenous issues. Looking forward, AER will continue its unwavering commitment to changing Australia’s drinking culture to one of safety and responsibility. For further information: www.aerf.com.au

() About the Galaxy Research:** The Galaxy study was commissioned by AER. These are the first results from the annual AER attitudinal survey. The online research was conducted between 15th to 18th January 2010. It was national survey (excluding NT) and was weighted by age, gender and location (based on ABS population estimates) to the national population. There were 1014 respondents aged 18 years and above.

***(**) This online research was conducted between 15th to 17th April 2009. Further information: <http://www.aerf.com.au/showcase/MediaReleases/2009/Media%20Release%20-%20Shift%20in%20Aussie%20attitude%20to%20drinking.pdf>