

## Media Statement

### AER RESPONDS TO 2010/11 FEDERAL BUDGET

#### **\$50 MILLION FOR BINGE DRINKING WELCOMED, BUT FAR FROM COMPREHENSIVE ALCOHOL REFORM**

**12th May 2010:** The Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AER), Australia's leading alcohol harm minimisation body, today acknowledged the Federal Government's commitment of \$50 million over 4 years towards an extension of the National Binge Drinking Strategy yesterday. AER Director Professor Ian Webster says it's a long way from the comprehensive alcohol reforms needed to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse on the Australian community.

"Alcohol is second only to smoking in the number of deaths from substance misuse in Australia. Alcohol misuse causes too much harm in our communities for this issue to continue to be treated lightly.

"Logic tells us that the Federal Government's \$50 million commitment will not go far in addressing the \$15 billion cost of alcohol-related harm to the community.

"There is widespread agreement that more needs to be done in Australia to reduce the harm caused by alcohol. Our research shows that overall, this view is shared by 79% of Australians<sup>1</sup>, with similar levels of support across all demographic groups and areas," said Professor Webster.

"Lasting behavioural change towards alcohol requires long term vision and commitment. Comprehensive alcohol reform must be implemented to produce generational change in our attitude and behaviour towards alcohol. As part of this holistic strategy, AER supports Ken Henry's recommendations to introduce volumetric taxation, as well as strategies relating to licensing and regulation, marketing and promotion, child and maternal health and initiatives to support young people.

For a decade, AER has supported innovative programs with grass roots community organisations, all levels of government, police, researchers and the private sector aimed at minimising the harms of alcohol and inhalant misuse.

"Those on the frontline deserve an appropriate level of funding that goes beyond ad hoc commitments and one-off strategies. Community workers, doctors, nurses and paramedics are

being faced with increasing levels of demand. The government can no longer ignore the magnitude of alcohol misuse on Australian families.

“Alcohol reform must be adopted in Australia if we are to begin to see any change in the way we drink. As a stated preventative health priority - The Federal Government must take up this challenge and take steps to improve our nations’ health and wellbeing,” said Professor Webster.

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**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 inhalant misuse into practical, real-life solutions. Since its inception in 2001, AER has invested over \$115 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](http://www.aerf.com.au)

**<sup>1</sup> About the Galaxy Research:** The Galaxy study was commissioned by AER. The online research was conducted in January 2010. It was a national survey (excluding NT) and was weighted by age, gender and location (based on ABS population estimates) to the national population. There were more than 1000 respondents aged 18 years and above.