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MEDIA RELEASE – SENSIBLE DISCUSSION ON THE PLACE OF ALCOHOL IN OUR COMMUNITY NEEDED

Queenslanders have long had a love affair with alcohol, but not every love affair has a happy ending.

Executive Officer for QNADA, the peak body for the Queensland non-government alcohol and other drug sector, Rebecca MacBean said that a sensible discussion about what we can do as a community to limit alcohol related harm is long overdue. She is joined in this appeal by Dr Anthony Lynham, a maxillo-facial surgeon at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

"I see the results of alcohol related violence every day and it's frustrating that our politicians don't seem to have the courage to do anything about it" said Dr Lynham. "That's why I'm such a strong supporter of organisations like QNADA. I admire their tenacity in advancing constructive discussion and meaningful reform on this issue".

Mrs MacBean is just as complimentary about Dr Lynham's commitment to the issue. "I met Dr Lynham at a forum on alcohol and other drug use in Brisbane this year, where he spoke frankly of his frustration at the growing demand for his service" she said. "It seems like a no brainer – sensible liquor licencing regulation would save us a huge amount as a community in terms of both the pain suffered by individuals and their families and the costs to our health and law enforcement systems."

Mrs MacBean continues, "while alcohol and substance misuse is regularly discussed in the media, it often focusses on the immediate and visible problems relating to violence and young people, which masks the fact that substance misuse is a problem across our whole society and is acknowledged as contributing to a range of less obvious harms".

This is played out across domestic violence, the child safety system, youth justice, mental ill-health and for many long-term drinkers – chronic disease. "This culminates in large numbers of unnecessary presentations to emergency departments, as well as preventable hospital admissions" Mrs MacBean said. "As a community we need to have a sensible discussion on how we want to manage alcohol, as part of a broader discussion about substance misuse. That's why it's so important that respected members of our community like Dr Lynham, are heard in this discussion".

She is optimistic that inroads can be made, innovative solutions implemented and results achieved if we all sat down together, faced the facts and acted on the evidence. "Our leaders need to be just as courageous as the 10 000 odd Queenslanders who seek assistance to address their alcohol use every year," she said.

"The Attorney-General has commenced a review of liquor licensing laws, a key influencing factor in the issue, and we hope that, commensurate to the level of consideration given to the views of the alcohol and hospital industries, the Queensland Government will work with the health and treatment sectors to develop a holistic approach to the responsible and safe consumption of alcohol".

This week is national Drug Action Week. Throughout the week, QNADA and its' members will be aiming to increase awareness about the harm caused by the misuse of alcohol and other drugs – with a focus on the impact of drugs and alcohol-related matters and communities and families. It also is an opportunity to highlight the achievements of the dedicated individuals who work within the AOD sector.

Enquiries and requests for further information should be directed to Rebecca MacBean, Executive Officer, QNADA on 0408 669 590 or Rebecca.MacBean@qnada.org.au. Further information about the work of QNADA and our members can be accessed via our website at www.qnada.org.au. Dr Lynham can be contacted on 0413 775 927.