

# AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



## Alcohol Supply

### Position Statement

#### Key messages and recommendations

- Alcohol consumption is a major cause of harm in Australia and is an important risk factor for a range of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease. It may also contribute to the development of other major chronic disease risk factors such as high blood pressure and obesity and overweight.
- There is a strong, consistent and positive link between alcohol availability and alcohol-related harms.
- Liquor control legislation should be based on alcohol harm minimisation principles and should be exempted from the requirements of National Competition Policy
- National guidelines on alcohol outlet density and opening hours based on harm minimisation principles should be developed to provide policy guidance to liquor licensing agencies, planning departments and local government in relation to liquor licensing.
- Nationally consistent, comprehensive and current data collections on alcohol outlets, alcohol sales and alcohol-related harms should be developed to facilitate research and evaluation in relation to the impact of changes in alcohol availability on alcohol related harms.

#### Background

Alcohol consumption, especially at high levels, can increase the risk of developing a range of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease. Alcohol is a cause of cancer and consumption at any level increases cancer risk. Alcohol consumption may also contribute to the development of other major chronic disease risk factors such as high blood pressure and obesity and overweight. An overview of evidence concerning alcohol use and chronic disease risk is provided in the ACDPA Position Statement: *Alcohol and Chronic Disease Prevention*.

The physical availability of alcohol has traditionally been regulated by governments through licensing regimes, which place limits on who can sell alcohol, when and where they can sell it and who they can sell it to. In Australia, the regulation of the sale of alcohol is the responsibility of state governments, which each have specific areas of the state bureaucracy that are responsible for liquor licensing. These liquor licensing authorities are responsible for the granting of new licences, the setting of trading conditions (e.g. hours of trade) and the imposition of penalties for breaches of licence conditions.

The de-regulation of liquor control laws in Australia in recent years, in accordance with the National Competition Policy, has seen an increase in the number and type of alcohol outlets and their trading hours, increasing the physical availability of alcohol.(1)

#### The relationship between alcohol availability and alcohol-related harm

There is a substantial research literature that has examined the impact of changes in alcohol availability on alcohol consumption and related harms.(2) Studies examining significant changes in the number of outlets selling alcohol have generally found that the higher the density of alcohol outlets the higher the levels of alcohol consumption and related harms. (3). Studies of more gradual changes in the number of alcohol outlets have produced less definitive findings in terms of alcohol consumption (3).

Australian research demonstrates a strong, consistent, positive link between alcohol availability and alcohol-related harms, particularly assaults, concurring with international studies. (4) For example, using data for Melbourne from 1996 to 2005, Livingston found significant positive relationships between the three major licence types (general, on-premise and packaged liquor) and rates of police-recorded assault.(5) Broadly speaking, this study demonstrated that areas in which alcohol outlets increase generally see increases in assaults, while areas in which outlet numbers decrease generally see fewer assaults. This is a consistent finding across a significant number of studies. (3)

Similarly, there is good evidence that extending the trading hours of alcohol outlets results in increases in alcohol-related problems.(3) In Western Australia, Chikritzhs and Stockwell examined the impact of granting hotels Extended Trading Permits, and found significant increases in rates of violence and motor vehicle crashes.(6;7) These studies also demonstrated that increasing the trading hours of licensed premises substantially increased the amount of alcohol consumed on these premises. Reducing alcohol trading hours also results in a reduction in alcohol related harms.(3) In Australia a study of reduced alcohol trading hours for pubs in the Newcastle central business district (CBD) found a 37% decrease in assaults in the CBD in comparison to a control locality.(8)

The relationship between alcohol related harms and alcohol outlet density and trading hours also appears to be influenced by outlet type and by other socio-demographic and contextual factors.(9) Further research into the impact of these factors would help to inform strategies to minimise alcohol related harms.

### **Acknowledgement**

This position statement is based on position statements on alcohol availability developed by the Alcohol Policy Coalition and the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol.

### **Further information**

Related ACPDA Position Statements available from [www.cancer.org.au/acdpa](http://www.cancer.org.au/acdpa)

- *Alcohol and Chronic Disease Prevention*
- *Alcohol Pricing and Taxation*
- *Marketing and Promotion of Alcohol*
- *Health information and warning labels on alcohol*

### **Reference List**

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- (4) Chikritzhs T N, Catalano P, Pascal R, Henrickson N. Predicting alcohol-related harms from licensed outlet density: A feasibility study. National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund, Commonwealth of Australia; 2007.
- (5) Livingston M. A longitudinal analysis of alcohol outlet density and assault. Alcohol Clin Exp Res 2008 Jun;32(6):1074-9.
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- (7) Chikritzhs T, Stockwell T. The impact of later trading hours for hotels on levels of impaired driver road crashes and driver breath alcohol levels. Addiction 2006 Sep;101(9):1254-64.
- (8) Kypri K, Jones C, McElduff P, Barker D. Effects of restricting pub closing times on night-time assaults in an Australian city. Addiction 2010 Sep 15.
- (9) Chikritzhs T N, Gray D, Lyons Z, Siggers S. Restrictions on the sale and supply of alcohol: evidence and outcomes. Perth: National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology; 2007.