

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY
to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

Liquor and Gambling Commissioner
GPO Box 2169
Adelaide SA 5001
By email: zoe.thomas@sa.gov.au

Re: Invitation to make submission on harm caused by alcohol consumption

Dear Commissioner

ANROWS thanks the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner of South Australia for the opportunity to make a submission on harm caused by alcohol consumption for the purposes of the applications for packaged liquor sales licences.

ANROWS is an independent, not-for-profit company established as an initiative under Australia's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan). Our primary function is to provide an accessible evidence base for developments in policy and practice design for prevention and response to violence against women, nationally. Every aspect of our work is motivated by the right of women and their children to live free from violence and in safe communities. We recognise, respect and respond to diversity among women and their children, and we are committed to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Primary (core) funding for ANROWS is jointly provided by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia. ANROWS is also, from time to time, directly commissioned to undertake work for an individual jurisdiction, and successfully tenders for research and evaluation work. ANROWS is registered as a harm prevention charity and deductible gift recipient, governed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC).

The submission provided below focuses on both ANROWS-funded and external research on the links between alcohol consumption and domestic, family and sexual violence against women.

We would be very pleased to assist the Commissioner further, as required.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Executive Officer

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Response to focus area: Alcohol consumption and violence against women

The link between alcohol consumption and violence against women is complex

In Australia, alcohol is involved in around half of all domestic and family violence (DFV) assaults reported to police, with incidents of violence increasing on days when male partners were drinking (Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, 2015a). Despite these statistics, there is little evidence to suggest that alcohol consumption is the primary driver of violence against women. However, there are still clear associations between alcohol consumption and violence against women, for instance, alcohol use increasing the severity of violence (Noonan et al., 2017).

ANROWS conducted research into the links between alcohol consumption and domestic and sexual violence against women in 2017. The report highlighted that the link between alcohol and violence against women is complex and contested (Noonan et al., 2017). It found that the link between alcohol consumption and violence against women can manifest in a number of ways: the perpetration of violence against women, the use of alcohol to victimise women, and women using alcohol as a coping strategy to deal with violence (Noonan et al., 2017). Research shows that alcohol use as a coping strategy has a range of flow-on effects including the increased risk of further violence, reduced ability to engage with treatment programs, and the increased likelihood of losing custody of children (FARE, 2015b & Quadara et al., 2015, as cited in Noonan et al., 2017). Research also shows that alcohol consumption is sometimes used as a justification, or an excuse, for violence (Noonan et al., 2017; Webster et al., 2014).

In 2017, ANROWS, along with its research partners, conducted and reported on the [National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey](#) (Webster et al., 2018). The survey examined, among other things, people's understanding of the role of alcohol and other drugs in excusing men's violence or victim-blaming women, including the notion that violence can be excused if the perpetrator is heavily affected by alcohol, or that if a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible. Encouragingly, the results from the survey show that a small and declining proportion of Australians believe in these notions of alcohol use to excuse violence or blame women (Webster et al., 2018).

Responses to harm caused by alcohol consumption need to be integrated

ANROWS research entitled [Links between alcohol consumption and domestic and sexual violence against women: Key findings and future directions](#) made recommendations that any alcohol-specific interventions (at government, community or individual levels) designed to reduce violence against women need to reflect the complexity of the connection between alcohol consumption and violence against women (Noonan et al., 2017). The regulation and planning of the sale and supply of alcohol should be comprehensive and integrated with programs that target other factors associated with violence against women (FARE, 2015a). This approach also aligns with the recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, which highlighted that there is a need for greater service integration and collaboration with all sectors to adequately respond to DFV (State of Victoria, 2016).

In 2015, ANROWS, in a joint project with VicHealth and Our Watch, produced a report entitled *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (Our Watch, 2015). *Change the Story* highlighted that responding to DFV requires systemic reform across all sectors, and suggested that reforms will need to involve overcoming the problematic community attitudes around alcohol and gender highlighted in the NCAS survey results above, in particular masculine associations with alcohol consumption (Our Watch, 2015 p. 34).

Change the Story made specific recommendations on improvements around the regulation of alcohol including its availability and pricing and the culture around alcohol (Our Watch, 2015, p. 34). The recommendations included cross-sector collaboration with DFV response services, peak policy agencies, mental health, and alcohol and other drug services to facilitate a holistic approach to overcome the harm caused by alcohol consumption (Our Watch, 2015).

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Planning for the geographic location of the sale and supply of alcohol should be considered and developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. Previous research highlights the way in which responses to violence against women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be holistic and community-driven. An integrated and community-driven approach needs to recognise the link between violence and issues that stem from colonisation, including alcohol use and intergenerational trauma, rather than solely focusing on gender inequality and male power (Blagg et al., 2020). The research report [*Understanding the role of Law and Culture in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in responding to and preventing family violence*](#) suggested that responses should be led by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations on prevention work such as healing, trauma counselling, and alcohol and other drug rehabilitation (Blagg et al., 2020). This approach is supported by a recent study that suggested that responding to violence against women will require working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who use violence to stop their use of violence, including providing support for underlying complexities such as alcohol use (Langton et al., 2020).

Other factors to consider when responding to harm caused by alcohol consumption

More recent research and events should also be taken into account when factoring in the harm caused by alcohol consumption in planning considerations. These will be discussed below.

COVID-19 and alcohol consumption

A recent Australian study conducted in May 2020 by the Australian Institute of Criminology examined the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on DFV (Morgan & Boxall, 2020). The study looked at how social isolation and financial stress could impact DFV. Women in the study reported increased alcohol consumption in the three months from February 2020. Although not necessarily a causal effect, the study found that women's safety frontline services were reporting increases in alcohol involvement in DFV incidents via results collated by Women's Safety NSW (cited in Morgan & Boxall, 2020).

Other recent research into the impact of alcohol-related harm in families and alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that the changes to alcohol consumption during large-scale

disasters may increase harm in families (Farrugia & Hinkley, 2021). For example, women with carer responsibilities were found to be at greater risk of increasing alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm. The findings indicate that there is a need for greater community awareness of the connection between alcohol consumption due to COVID-19 and the risk of alcohol-related harm. Responses addressing alcohol-related harm will need to involve collaboration with alcohol and other drug services, DFV services and policymakers (Farrugia & Hinkley, 2021).

Gambling and increased alcohol consumption

A recent ANROWS-funded study [*The relationship between gambling and intimate partner violence against women*](#) found that violence was more likely to escalate where there was problem gambling present, whether by the man or the woman (Hing et al., 2020). The study reported that alcohol or drug use by a partner dramatically increased their gambling activities. Women reported being fearful of their own and their children's safety where gambling losses led to alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence (Hing et al., 2020, p. 43). The study also found that the availability of alcohol at gambling venues increased problem gambling among the men interviewed (Hing et al., 2020, p. 71).

Major sporting events and alcohol

A recent UK study has found that alcohol consumption following football matches coincided with increased DFV in the hours after a game (Ivandic et al., 2021). The report found that instances of DFV increased in areas where a major match took place at midday or in the afternoon, where perpetrators had the opportunity for longer periods to drink after the game. The findings suggested that changing kick-off times can impact DFV. In addition, the report also noted that professional teams should rethink their historically close relationship with alcohol brands due to the links between alcohol and violence against women (Ivandic et al., 2021).

Summary and recommendation

Alcohol does not, in itself, cause DFV, and cannot be used to excuse violence. However, alcohol is connected to the perpetration of violence in a number of ways – for example, alcohol use can increase the severity of violence. When examining the sale and supply of alcohol, consideration should be given to the complex relationship between alcohol consumption and violence against women. This consideration should also recognise other contributing factors, including the impact of disasters like bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the links between alcohol consumption and problem gambling.

The regulation and planning of alcohol should be holistic and integrated with services and programs that target other factors associated with violence against women. ANROWS evidence repeatedly emphasises the value of cross-sector collaborations, and it is our recommendation that planning decisions are made in conjunction with all agencies who interact directly or indirectly with DFV in the specific region, including local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and community organisations.

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