

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 updated submission on harm caused by alcohol consumption

Dear Commissioner

ANROWS thanks the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner of South Australia for the opportunity to make an updated submission on harm caused by alcohol consumption, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, 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 the pandemic, alcohol consumption and domestic, family and sexual violence.

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

Yours sincerely



Padma Raman PSM

Chief Executive Officer

24 October 2022

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited
PO Box Q389, Queen Victoria Building, NSW, 1230
ABN 67 162 349 171
Phone +61 2 8374 4000 anrows.org.au

Response to focus area: COVID-19, alcohol consumption and domestic and family violence

Since ANROWS's original submission to the Liquor and Gambling Commission in July 2021, there have been considerable changes in the COVID-19-related socio-economic context in Australia. This updated submission responds to the request from the South Australian Liquor and Gambling Commissioner to provide any further evidence on current trends in patterns of alcohol consumption and associated risk of harm – specifically in relation to the availability of packaged liquor, and in light of the current stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Extensive research has been undertaken which has aimed to capture the impact COVID-19 has had on individuals, families and communities not only across Australia, but internationally. The research relating to domestic and family violence has been vast. So too has research relating directly to alcohol misuse throughout the pandemic, notably in relation to emotional wellbeing and financial and employment status. Despite some initial research from the Australian Institute of Criminology (Morgan & Boxall, 2020), which referenced some early signs of increased alcohol consumption directly impacting domestic and family violence in the three months after the pandemic began, there has been little conclusive evidence found in Australia since. There has, however, been some research of interest internationally, providing insights into the dynamics of COVID-19, alcohol consumption and domestic and family violence.

Evidence suggests an increase in alcohol consumption during COVID-19

Prior to the pandemic, almost two-thirds of alcohol was already consumed at home in Australia (Callinan, 2020). One Australian study, which focused specifically on alcohol consumption throughout the pandemic, attributed patterns of alcohol misuse to shifts in the Australian Government's approach to relaxing liquor licenses throughout the pandemic (Cobolt et al., 2020). This was investigated specifically in relation to increasing access to takeaway alcohol, which enabled an increase in drinking within the home (Cobolt et al., 2020). Importantly, this varied across jurisdictions and was not specific to South Australia.

Evidence suggests an increase in domestic and family violence during COVID-19

The most comprehensive research undertaken in Australia relating to COVID-19 and violence against women is the ANROWS report *Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia* (Boxall & Morgan, 2021). Through a survey of 10,000 women in Australia, the research explored the experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) among Australian women in the 12 months following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey respondents reported that the pandemic coincided with first-time (44.9%) and escalating (41.7%) violence. Many women attributed these changes to factors associated with the pandemic such as changes to mental and physical health and wellbeing, financial status and employment status.

Evidence suggests a link between alcohol consumption and domestic and family violence

While the evidence in Australia pertaining to the link between alcohol consumption and domestic and family violence is not currently extensive, international research has found a link between changing drinking patterns and an increased risk of domestic, family and sexual violence. In the United States, Campbell (2020), attributed the stay-at-home policies with an increase in alcohol consumed within the home and as such shifted drinking patterns throughout COVID-19 potentially increasing domestic, family and sexual violence. These same stay-at-home policies were also enforced across Australia. The evidence that we do have indicates that, in Australia, 26.6 per cent of women who reported a decrease in violence attributed this to a change in their partner's use of alcohol or drugs (Boxall & Morgan, 2021). Women were more likely to attribute escalation of violence to their own and their partner's mental and physical health and wellbeing and changes to financial status for either partner.

Recommendation

The relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic, alcohol, and domestic and family violence is complex. Research thus far has largely been inconclusive as to whether there have been any significant impacts on domestic and family violence pertaining directly to patterns of alcohol misuse throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Though some research does suggest that the stay-at-home policies enforced, as well as shifts in liquor licensing, resulted in more alcohol consumption in the home and an increased risk of violence, the constant changing socio-economic context of the COVID-19 pandemic makes it challenging to be conclusive. The stay-at-home policies have now ceased in Australia, and research is still being undertaken to determine any ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, when examining the ongoing sale and supply of alcohol, consideration should be given to both Australian and international findings that suggest takeaway alcohol may contribute to an increase in domestic and family violence, as opposed to alcohol consumed within more public settings.

References

Boxall, H., & Morgan, A. (2021). *Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia* (Research report, 03/2021). ANROWS.

Callinan, S., Smit, K., Mojica-Perez, Y., D'Aquino, S., Moore, D., & Kuntsche, E. (2020). Shifts in alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic: Early indications from Australia. *Addiction*, *116*(6), 1381–1388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15275>

Campbell, M. (2020). An increasing risk of family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: Strengthening community collaborations to save lives. *Forensic Science International: Reports*, *2*, 100089. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsir.2020.100089>

Colbert, S., Wilkinson, C., Thornton, L. & Richmond, R. (2020). COVID-19 and alcohol in Australia: Industry changes and public health impacts. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, *39*, 435–440.

Morgan, A., & Boxall H. (2020). Social isolation, time spend at home, financial stress and domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* (no. 609). Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti04855>