

# Alcohol policy issues - where is the biggest bang for the buck?

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WORLD CANCER CONGRESS, MONTREAL, CANADA – AUGUST 2012



# Alcohol in Australia

## Prevalence:

- 4 out every 5 Australians are drinkers.
- Most drink at low risk levels.
- But 1 on 5 drink at risky levels at least once a month.

## Key Trends:

- Per capita alcohol consumption is increasing.
- 'Extreme risky drinking' (20+ std drinks per occasion) among young people rising.
- Cases of liver cirrhosis are increasing.
- Victoria has experienced one the highest increases in alcohol-related hospitalizations since 1996.

## Impact on Public Health:

- Responsible for 3.3% of Burden of Disease.
- Causes more than 200 types of disease.
- 3/4 of Australians are negatively affected by somebody else's drinking.
- \$35 billion annual cost to Australian community.

# What are the most effective strategies?

Intervention	Effectiveness?	Research Support?	Cross-national testing?
Alcohol taxes	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Minimum (floor) price of alcohol products	?	✓	0
Bans on discounts and promotions of alcohol products	?	✓	0
Differential prices by beverage	✓	✓	✓
Special taxes on alcopops/youth targeted drinks	✓	✓	✓
Complete ban on alcohol sales*	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Bans on drinking in public places	?	✓	✓
Minimum legal purchase age	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Rationing of alcohol	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Government monopoly of alcohol retail sales	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Hours and days of sale restrictions on outlets	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Restrictions on density of outlets	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Different availability by alcohol strength	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

\* Can have adverse side-effects

# What are the most effective strategies?

Intervention	Effectiveness?	Research Support?	Cross-national testing?
Training for bar in responsible service of alcohol	0/✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Training for bar staff to manage aggression	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Strengthened enforcement of liquor laws	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Server liability	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Voluntary codes of bar practice	0	✓	✓
Late-night lockout of licensed premises	?	✓	0
Drink driving check points	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Random breath testing for drivers	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Lowered BAC limits for drivers	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Driver license suspension	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Lower BAC limits for young drivers	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓
Designated driver programs	0	✓	✓
Severity of punishment for drink driving	0/✓	✓✓	✓✓

# What are the most effective strategies?

Intervention	Effectiveness?	Research Support?	Cross-national testing?
Legal restrictions on advertising exposure	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Legal restrictions on advertising content	?	✓	✓
Industry self-regulation advertising codes	0	✓✓	✓✓
Classroom education	0	✓✓✓	✓✓
Tertiary student education programs	✓	✓	0
Brief interventions with high risk students	✓	✓	0
Mass media campaigns (including drink drive)	0	✓✓✓	✓✓
Product warning labels and signs	0	✓	0
Social marketing	0	✓✓	0
Brief interventions with at risk drinkers	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Mutual help/self help attendance	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Mandatory treatment of drink drive offenders	✓	✓✓	0
Medical and social detoxification	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Talk therapies	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Pharmaceutical therapies	✓	✓✓	✓✓

# Examples from around the world

## Setting a minimum (floor) price on alcohol

- Economic and epidemiological modelling by Sheffield University found that introducing a £0.45 minimum price in the UK would:
  - ✓ be more effective overall than a 10% general price increase; and,
  - ✓ have lessened effect on moderate drinkers than harmful drinkers
- This is because a minimum price would target cheap alcohol products, which make up a higher proportion of the average selection of alcohol purchases for heavier drinkers than for moderate drinkers.
- In May 2012, the Scottish parliament approved a new minimum price for alcohol of 50p per unit (around AUD\$0.75) to tackle the country's alcohol problems. The cheapest bottle of wine will now cost around £4.70 (around AUD\$7.00).

# Examples from around the world

## Restricting opening hours

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- Research from Brazil, Canada, Nordic countries, USA and Australia have found that when hours and days of sale increase, alcohol consumption and related problems increase, and vice versa.
- A study in Ontario, Canada looked at the impact of extending opening hours from a closing time of 1:00am, to a new closing time of 2:00am.
- The study found that as a result of the later closing times, there were recorded increases in assaults and fall-related injuries in Ontario.

# Examples from around the world

## Advertising restrictions

- France has one of the world's most comprehensive systems of regulation for alcohol marketing known as Loi Evin.
- Alcohol advertising is not permitted on television or cinemas, nor is any sponsorship of sport or cultural events permitted.
- Advertisements are not permitted to depict drinkers or drinking.

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# Examples of success from Australia

## Taxation

Northern Territory “Living with Alcohol” program

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- Between 1992 and 1997, the Northern Territory government imposed a 5% alcohol tax (22% on alcohol products with an alcohol content greater than 3.0% A. Indigenous Australians).

Source: Chikritzhs, T et al. Northern Territory's Living With Alcohol program. *Addiction* 100( 1625–1636. 2005

# Examples of success from Australia

## Taxation

### Alcopops Tax Increase

- In 2008, the newly elected Australian Government increased taxes on ready-to-drink (RTD) spirits-based alcoholic beverages (alcopops) with the stated objective to reduce their harmful use by young Australians.
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Source: Skov, et al . Is the “alcopops” tax working? Probably yes but there is a bigger picture.  
*Med J Aust* 2011; 195 (2): 84-86.

# Examples of success from Australia

## Earlier closing times

- In 2008, in the Australian city of Newcastle, the closing times for licensed premises were changed from 5:00am to 3:00am (along with a 1:00am lockout and a ban on selling shots/mixed drinks after 10:00pm).
- There was a significant reduction in night time assaults ( $n = -133$ ) in Newcastle in the year following the introduction of the earlier closing

## Earlier closing times

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In 2008, in the Australian city of Newcastle, the closing times for licensed

Source: Jones, C. *et al.* The impact of restricted alcohol availability on alcohol-related violence in Newcastle, NSW. *Crime and Justice Bulletin*. Number 137. November 2009. University of Newcastle Australia and NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.



# Where is the biggest bang for buck?

Topic	Cost-effectiveness results
Advertising bans	dominant
Brief GP intervention	very cost effective
Brief GP intervention and telephone support	very cost effective
Drink driving mass media	cost effective
Licensing controls	very cost effective
Raising minimum drinking age	very cost effective
Random breath testing	cost effective
Volumetric tax (revenue neutral)	dominant

## Sources:

Deakin Health Economics. *Cost-effectiveness of cancer prevention and screening strategies 2000-2001. Evaluated as Robust and Generalizable to Australia*. Deakin University, Melbourne. Unpublished. 2012.

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Chisholm D,



# The health and economic benefits of reducing disease risk factors

- A study by Deakin University and VicHealth estimated the health and economic benefits of reducing per capita alcohol consumption in Australia.
- If the per capita consumption was reduced from 9.8 litres of alcohol p.a to 6.4 litres p.a. the impact would be:
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  - If the per capita consumption was reduced from 9.8 litres of alcohol p.a to 6.4 litres p.a. the impact would be:

Potential opportunity cost savings of \$789 million in health sector costs and



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3-6 December 2014

