



Alcohol Policy Coalition

# Five steps to a safer, healthier Victoria



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## WHEN WE DRINK

### Address availability and alcohol related violence

- Introduce 3am as the latest time for serving alcohol in pubs and clubs
- Maintain and extend the freeze on granting new late night licences
- Introduce 10pm as the latest time for packaged liquor sales

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## HOW WE DRINK

### Promote safer consumption of alcohol

- Tighten controls on the availability of packaged liquor
- Prohibit activities which encourage irresponsible drinking
- Introduce a responsible service requirement for secondary supply

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## WHERE WE DRINK

### Minimise harm through liquor licensing reform

- Tighten controls on liquor licensing including tailoring approaches to liquor licensing in high risk areas
- Prioritise harm minimisation in liquor licensing
- Consider transport options in assessing licence applications

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## DRINK MESSAGES

### Protect children and young people from alcohol advertising

- Restrict alcohol advertising from places and times where children and young people may be exposed.
- Support advertising restrictions with a sustained social marketing campaign about responsible drinking.

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## POLICY EVALUATION

### Support evidence-based policy

- Commence collecting alcohol sales data in order to evaluate policies

## Responding to alcohol related harm in Victoria

In Victoria in the last decade, rates of a wide range of social and health harms due to drinking have increased significantly.<sup>1</sup> This is despite alcohol consumption being relatively stable over the same period. Just as the drivers of alcohol-related harms are multifactorial, so too must the responses to these harms be comprehensive and evidence based.

There is a significant body of research that identifies those policies most effective at reducing alcohol-related harm. These include interventions to reduce ease of access, and ensure responsible sale and supply of alcohol, as well as models of enforcement and monitoring which improve and measure the effectiveness of these interventions.

Supporting businesses and encouraging competition in the alcohol industry is important but should not come at the cost of a healthy and safe community—it should be emphasised that the liquor licence is a privilege and not a right.

The current approach to the sale and supply of alcohol in Victoria appropriately includes a risk based approach to licensing. However, more can be done to reduce alcohol-related harms, and to reduce the economic and social costs associated with such harm in this State.

The Alcohol Policy Coalition's election platform calls for a suite of reforms that require a comprehensive review of the way alcohol use, supply and promotion is regulated in Victoria, in order to deliver a framework that is more clearly directed to reducing alcohol-related harm.

## WHEN WE DRINK

### Address availability and alcohol related violence

There is a considerable body of evidence in Australia and internationally to show that reducing the trading hours of licensed venues can reduce alcohol-related harm.

We know that most alcohol-related assaults occur between 9pm and 3am on Friday and Saturday nights. Research shows that premises with extended licences or 24-hour trading hours recorded a greater number of assaults compared with those trading for standard hours.<sup>2</sup> Chikritzhs and Stockwell found significant increases in assaults and impaired driver road crashes associated with the extension of hotel closing hours from midnight to 1am.<sup>3</sup>

Even small reductions in closing times can reduce harms. In Newcastle in 2008, the implementation of mandatory 3am closing for licensed premises (from 5am) together with a 1:30am lockout as well as restrictions on the types of drinks available, resulted in a significant decrease (37 per cent) in the number of assaults occurring in the city after 10pm.<sup>4</sup> This approach has now been adopted more widely in New South Wales, in particular in the Sydney CBD.

The Victorian community is concerned about unrestricted availability of alcohol from 24-hour bottle shops and late night venues (licensed venues which trade after 11pm). The ready availability of packaged liquor, especially in entertainment precincts, needs greater control. Ending late-night opening of bottle shops would limit side- and post-loading in nightclubs and on the street late at night when alcohol-induced assaults and other problems are most acute.

#### We call on the Victorian Government to:

- Introduce 3am as the latest time for serving alcohol in all pubs and clubs**
- Support cessation of service with measures including restrictions on the sale of particular drinks after 12 midnight (including shots and doubles as occurred in Newcastle)**
- Extend the freeze on issuing extended licences after 1am to Melbourne suburbs outside the inner city, and beyond 2015**
- Introduce 10pm as the latest time for packaged liquor sales (including from supermarket outlets)**

## HOW WE DRINK

### Promote safer consumption of alcohol

Alcohol has become increasingly accessible through an increased number of licensed premises and the proliferation of packaged liquor outlets. Pricing and discounting have compounded the problem.

Between 1993 and 2008 the number of pubs in Victoria increased by around 30% and bottle-shops increased by more than 80%.<sup>5</sup>

There is good Australian evidence highlighting the relationship between the availability of alcohol, and adverse impacts on community safety, amenity, and public health. Victorian research shows links between the number of on-premise licensed venues and the rate of alcohol-related problems—particularly street violence.<sup>6</sup> Research has also found a strong association between increases in packaged liquor availability and the rates of domestic violence and incidence of chronic alcohol-related disease.<sup>7</sup>

The Victorian Government can promote safer consumption of alcohol, by addressing issues such as:

- The high density of packaged liquor outlets in local communities, particularly in low income neighbourhoods;
- Discounting practices that encourage risky pre-loading drinking, such as bulk discounting and cross-promotions by supermarkets;
- Enforcing penalties for the sale of liquor to persons who are already intoxicated, under existing prohibitions<sup>8</sup>;
- Imposing a responsible service of alcohol restriction on authorised secondary supply of alcohol to minors (to bring Victoria's new secondary supply laws in line with legislation in other Australian jurisdictions).

We also call on the Victorian Government to:

- E. Address the availability of packaged liquor, through imposing limits on the numbers of packaged liquor licences;
- F. Prohibit activities or practices which encourage irresponsible drinking; and
- G. Reform Victoria's secondary supply laws to include a requirement for responsible supply to minors.

## WHERE WE DRINK

### Minimise harm through liquor licensing reform

The Victorian Government can support local councils dealing with alcohol regulation by adopting tailored approaches to liquor licensing, including capping the number of new late-night licences and addressing the undue availability of alcohol. Capping new late-night licences would be a first step towards countering alcohol-fuelled, anti-social behaviour, which mars the late-night entertainment environment, and runs contrary to community sentiment about responsible alcohol consumption. It also sends a clear message that alcohol does not need to be the predominant feature of a cosmopolitan, 24-hour city.

We call on the Victorian Government to:

- H. Develop a framework for liquor licensing that prioritises harm minimisation in assessing applications by:
  - i. including limits on the number and type of licences in each area; and
  - ii. taking account of transport options when assessing applications.

## DRINK MESSAGES

### Protect children and young people from alcohol advertising

There is a positive correlation between alcohol advertising exposure and the uptake of alcohol use in young people. Children and young people are exposed to a significant amount of alcohol advertising in Victoria, whether or not exposure is intended by advertisers and the industry.

There is widespread support for policies that protect children and young people from the harmful effects of alcohol advertising.<sup>9</sup>

We support the Government's plans for a long-term alcohol cultural change campaign. This campaign must be evidence-informed, sustained over time, and complemented by a range of other initiatives aimed at changing the drinking culture, such as the regulatory and enforcement reforms we have outlined in this paper.

- I. To the extent that it falls within the jurisdiction of the Victorian Government, we call on the Victorian Government to:
  - i. introduce restrictions for alcohol advertising in locations, publications, times and other promotions where advertising is likely to be seen by people under the age of 18, with a particular focus on advertising outdoors, on and around public transport, and at point of sale;
  - ii. phase out alcohol sponsorship of events that allow underage entry; and
  - iii. support these efforts with a sustained public education campaign.

## POLICY EVALUATION

### Support evidence-based policy

#### Sales data collection

In contrast to Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, wholesale alcohol sales data in Victoria are not collected. This prevents the assessment of changes in alcohol consumption induced by variations in policy.

The Alcohol Policy Coalition believes that the collection of alcohol sales data in Victoria is fundamentally important and in the public interest, as it would improve the ability to assess the effectiveness of policies aimed at minimising the harm from alcohol.

- J. We call on the Government to implement collection of alcohol sales data (in line with the National Drug Research Institute's National Alcohol Sales Data Project) from 1 January 2015.

1. M Livingston, S Matthews, M Barratt, B Lloyd, and R Room 'Diverging trends in alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm in Victoria' (2010) 34(4) *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 368-373.

2. Suzanne Briscoe and Neil Donnelly 'Assaults on licensed premises in inner-urban areas' [October 2001] *Alcohol Studies Bulletin*, No. 2, Curtin University of Technology and NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 8.

3. Thomas Babor et al, *Alcohol – No Ordinary Commodity* (Oxford University Press, 2nd ed, 2010) 133.

4. J Wiggers [2012] Presentation to the Newcastle CDAT Forum March 2012, Research evidence for reducing alcohol-related harm.

5. M Livingston 'The social gradient of alcohol availability in Victoria, Australia' [2012] 36 *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 41-47.

6. M Livingston, T Chikritzhs, and R Room, 'Changing the Density of Alcohol Outlets to Reduce Alcohol-Related Problems' [2007] 26 *Drug and Alcohol Review* 557-566; M Livingston, 'A longitudinal analysis of alcohol outlet density and assault' [2008] 32 *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 1074-1079.

7. M Livingston, 'Alcohol outlet density and harm: Comparing the impacts on violence and chronic harms' [2011] 30 *Drug and Alcohol Review* 515-523; M Livingston, 'A longitudinal analysis of alcohol outlet density and domestic violence' [2011] 106(6) *Addiction* 919-925.

8. Victorian Auditor-General's Report, *Effectiveness of Justice Strategies in preventing and Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm* (2012), 39.

9. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010 *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* (2011) 174-175. Foundation for Alcohol Research and Evaluation, *Annual Alcohol Poll 2012: Community attitudes and behaviours* (2012); Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, *Community Attitudes to Alcohol Policy – Survey Results 2010*, Unpublished.

## About the Alcohol Policy Coalition

The Alcohol Policy Coalition is a collaboration of health and social agencies with shared concern relating to the misuse of alcohol and its health and social impacts on the community. The Alcohol Policy Coalition's long-term goal is to promote a safer, healthier community drinking culture.

Australian Medical Association (Victoria)  
Australian Drug Foundation  
Cancer Council Victoria  
Public Health Association of Australia (Victoria)  
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons  
Turning Point  
Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of  
Victoria and Tasmania  
Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association

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