



# HEALTH WISE

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QCAA 2020 QUEENSLAND ELECTION PLATFORM



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## About QCAA

The Queensland Coalition for Action on Alcohol (QCAA) is committed to reducing alcohol-related harm. QCAA identifies and prioritises actions needed to reduce alcohol harms and improve the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and ensures that these actions are raised with decision makers.

QCAA currently has 14 leading health and community service agencies as our members:

These are:

- Australian Drug Foundation Queensland
- Australian Medical Association Queensland
- Cancer Council Qld
- Collaboration for Alcohol Related Developmental Disorders
- Drug and Alcohol Nurses Australasia
- Drug ARM
- Drug Awareness & Relief Foundation (Australia)
- Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)
- Lives Lived Well
- Royal Australian College of Surgeons (Queensland)
- Salvation Army
- Queensland Alcohol and Drug Research and Education Centre
- Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group
- Queensland Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies

For further information about QCAA, visit [www.qcaa.org.au](http://www.qcaa.org.au) or contact the QCAA secretariat at [contactus@qcaa.org.au](mailto:contactus@qcaa.org.au)

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## Introduction

Alcohol has a complex role in our society. While some Queenslanders abstain from alcohol altogether<sup>1</sup>, alcohol is widely reported as being part of the cultural identity of Australians to the point where not consuming alcohol can be viewed as 'unAustralian'<sup>2</sup>.

Examples of this unhealthy relationship with alcohol can be seen in intoxication as a rite of passage into adulthood, peer pressure to consume alcohol, the lauding of alcohol consumption by the media and advertising, the belief that alcohol and celebration are intrinsically linked, and the widespread availability of cheap alcohol products.

While many may regard this cultural norm with alcohol as positive and relatively harmless, the broader social, health, and economic impacts are often underestimated.

Harmful consumption of alcohol can lead to devastating social costs, such as increased risk of motor vehicle crashes and other causes of injury, pedestrian fatalities, crime, work accidents, street and family violence and sexual assault<sup>3</sup>. Alcohol is a significant contributor to family violence and child maltreatment, involved in up to 67 per cent of family violence incidents reported to police and up to 47 per cent of child abuse cases in Australia<sup>4</sup>.

Around 1 in 3 people exceed the current National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines to reduce single occasion risk of harm<sup>5</sup>, but people often do not recognise that this is damaging to their health. 72 per cent of Queensland drinkers are comfortable with how much they drink, yet 50 per cent drink to get drunk<sup>6</sup>. Alcohol's link to cancer, cardio-vascular disease, mental health problems and many chronic diseases is still poorly understood by the wider community<sup>7</sup>. While most Australians associate illnesses such as cirrhosis of the liver (76%) and liver cancer (72%) with alcohol use, fewer Australians are aware of the link between alcohol use and heart disease (54%), stroke (41%), mouth and throat cancer (29%) and breast cancer (16%). A small number of people (5%) are unaware that alcohol is linked with any of the conditions mentioned above<sup>8</sup>.

But this isn't just a social or health issue, it's an economic issue. The latest assessment by the Chief Health Officer estimates that the financial cost of alcohol consumption to the Queensland economy is \$2.2 billion, with \$400 million spent on healthcare, \$720 million in productivity losses including absenteeism, \$310 million in home production losses, \$320 million in crime and \$440 million in road transport injuries<sup>9</sup>.

A lot of progress has been made. The *Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence* measures introduced in 2016 addressed have been evaluated as a success, allowing Queenslanders to have the freedom to go to local entertainment precincts and not to worry about being exposed to alcohol related anti-social behaviour and violence<sup>10</sup>. Queenslanders want these measures so they can enjoy their time with friends and family, rather than be concerned about the safety of themselves and those around them<sup>11</sup>.

The overwhelming majority of Queenslanders believe that we have a problem with alcohol, and that more needs to be done to address alcohol-related harms<sup>12</sup>. QCAA shares their concerns. We want Queenslanders to live happy, healthy, safe and productive lives that contribute in a positive way to the social fabric of Queensland society.

This election, the QCAA on behalf of its members is asking all political leaders and parties to put the health of Queenslanders first by supporting evidence-based alcohol policies. Our 5 Point Plan builds on the existing efforts and responses to prevent and minimise the social, health and economic harms of alcohol.

## What do Queenslanders think about alcohol and what do they support?<sup>13</sup>



OF QUEENSLANDERS BELIEVE AUSTRALIA HAS A PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL



OF QUEENSLANDERS THINK MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO REDUCE ALCOHOL RELATED HARM



OF QUEENSLANDERS BELIEVE POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO RECEIVE DONATIONS FROM THE ALCOHOL INDUSTRY



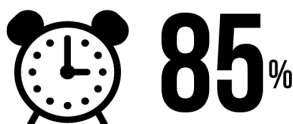
OF QUEENSLANDERS DRINK TO GET DRUNK



OF QUEENSLANDERS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE



ONLY 10% KNOW THAT FOUR STANDARD DRINKS IS THE MAXIMUM TO MINIMISE SHORT TERM HARM



OF AUSTRALIANS BELIEVE THAT PUBS, CLUBS AND BARS SHOULD CLOSE AT 3AM OR EARLIER



OF QUEENSLANDERS BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD ENSURE THAT ALCOHOL PRODUCTS ARE NOT SOLD BELOW THE PRICE OF BOTTLED WATER OR SOFT DRINKS



OF QUEENSLANDERS BELIEVE THERE ARE PLACES WHERE ALCOHOL ADVERTISING SHOULD BE BANNED

# PAYING THE PRICE OF ALCOHOL

## IMPACT ON MORTALITY

**15** AUSTRALIANS DIE FROM ALCOHOL EVERY DAY

**1300** ANNUAL DEATHS ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL IN QLD

**53** AVERAGE ANNUAL ROAD DEATHS ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL IN QLD

**#2** PREVENTABLE CAUSE OF HOSPITALISATIONS AND DEATH IN AUSTRALIA

**1 IN 5** AUSTRALIANS OVER 14 DRINK AT LEVELS THAT PUT THEM AT RISK OVER THEIR LIFETIME

**200+** DISEASES AND INJURY CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL USE



**RISK**

ALCOHOL INCREASES RISK FOR:

- HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
- CIRRHOSIS OF THE LIVER
- DEPRESSION
- STOMACH CANCER
- MOUTH CANCER
- THROAT CANCER
- BREAST CANCER
- LIVER CANCER

## IMPACT ON HEALTH

## IMPACT ON SYSTEMS

**\$770M** ANNUAL COST OF ALCOHOL RELATED ROAD INJURY IN QUEENSLAND

**24%** OF SUBSTANTIATED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES INVOLVED PARENTAL ALCOHOL MISUSE

**37K** HOSPITALISATIONS IN QLD DUE TO ALCOHOL ON AVERAGE PER YEAR

**562** HOSPITALISATIONS IN QUEENSLAND DUE TO DRINK DRIVING

## Our 5 Point Plan to reduce alcohol related harms

### Section 1: Improving community safety and amenity

1. Retain the *Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence* policy and expand the policy to end the sale of all take-away alcohol at 10pm
2. Enforce responsible service of alcohol monitoring compliance checks by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation at point of delivery for alcohol products sold online.

### Section 2: Managing availability, price and promotion

3. Spearhead advocacy efforts at the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum to introduce a nationally consistent minimum unit price on alcohol.
4. Tighten advertising restrictions on government buildings and implement a complete ban immediately.

### Section 3: Promoting healthier communities

5. Develop and initiate a comprehensive, evidence-based community campaign on the direct link between alcohol consumption and chronic disease including at least seven types of cancer, mental health and heart disease.

## Section 1 - Improving community safety and amenity

### 1. Retain the Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence policy and expand the policy to end the sale of all take-away alcohol at 10pm

Following the successful implementation of the *Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence* policy, levels of alcohol-related violence in safe night precincts (SNPs) have reduced and people have reported feeling safer when enjoying the state's nightlife<sup>25</sup>.

**29%**

Average reduction per month state-wide in serious assaults between 3 and 6am

**40%**

40% reduction per month in the Fortitude Valley SNP in serious assaults between 3 and 6am

**29%**

29% reduction in ambulance callouts in SNPs between 3 and 6am, and an 11% average reduction state-wide

**12%**

12% reduction in hospital admissions of ocular bone fractures in greater Brisbane, and a 4% average reduction per month state-wide

**1**

at least one serious crime (including rape and grievous bodily harm) per week across Queensland has been solved using ID scanner data.

While the QUANTEM report shows that trading hours restrictions have successfully reduced the quantity of alcohol consumed at on-licence premises and related harms, there is still more

to be done. Over one third of Queenslanders (38%) are still experiencing the harms associated with alcohol-related violence and excessive drinking<sup>26</sup>.

Pre-drinking is recognised as a contributor to the harms experienced in safe night precincts, with 83.7 per cent of people report consuming alcohol from take away outlets prior to attending pubs, clubs and bars<sup>27</sup>. These harms disproportionately impact young people, who are more sensitive to the discrepancy in pricing of alcoholic products and opt for take-away liquor before entering precincts.

78.2 per cent of all alcohol purchased in Australia is bought from take away liquor outlets<sup>28</sup>. This has been further amplified in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed the way that many people buy and consume alcohol. One in five (20 per cent) households reported buying more alcohol than usual since the outbreak in Australia<sup>29</sup>. Of those households, 70 per cent reported drinking more alcohol than usual and 32 per cent are concerned with the amount of alcohol either they or someone in their household is drinking.

56 per cent of Queenslanders support a closing time of bottle shops of no later than 10pm<sup>30</sup>. The Queensland Government has taken the first step by restricting the sale of take away alcohol past 10pm for new licence applications, however many are still trading beyond this time. This excessive availability of alcohol is concerning because the evidence shows that the more available alcohol is, the higher the risk of alcohol related harms<sup>31</sup>.

The Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence policy should be extended to regulate these other sites of alcohol related harm. We encourage all political parties and leaders to commit to retaining the Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence policy and expanding the policy to end the sale of all take-away alcohol at 10pm.

## **2. Enforce responsible service of alcohol monitoring compliance checks by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation at point of delivery for alcohol products sold online.**

The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation (OLGR) notes that there are currently no monitoring compliance checks being conducted for Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) to private residences<sup>32</sup>.

This gap allows alcohol to potentially be delivered to underage people, those already intoxicated, or even left unattended. Unenforced, there is no way of monitoring whether online alcohol retailers are failing to meet the Responsible Service of Alcohol obligations required in their risk assessment plans<sup>33</sup>.

Three quarters of online retailers advertise a willingness to leave alcohol unattended at an address, and 24% of Australians aged 18-24 report not having their ID checked last time they received an alcohol delivery<sup>34</sup>. On top of this, alcohol delivery services and rapid alcohol delivery services (delivery within a couple hours of ordering) are more likely to be used by people who consume alcohol at risky levels<sup>35</sup>. 20% of people who use a rapid alcohol delivery service receive their orders while already intoxicated<sup>36</sup>.

These rapid delivery services are used by heavy drinkers to continue drinking when they run out of alcohol, enabling excessive drinking far beyond what may have been originally planned<sup>37 38</sup>. Jimmy Brings, an alcohol delivery service that boasts delivery in just 30 minutes, states

on their website, 'We never want you to call it a night because you're out of booze ever' <sup>39</sup> – directly targeting alcohol sales to intoxicated people. It is an enforceable offence under RSA for a traditional retailer to sell alcohol to an unduly intoxicated person<sup>40</sup>, so it is logical for the same compliance checks to be enforced for private residence delivery services.

COVID-19 restrictions – closure of venues and discouraged travel – have made these delivery services much more popular as drinking at home increases<sup>41</sup>. Online retailers have seen business spike by more than 50% since the pandemic <sup>42</sup>, and polling by FARE revealed that 70% of Australians started drinking more since the COVID-19 outbreak, with more being consumed at-home and alone <sup>43</sup>.

Compliance checks have for a long time been a vital part of the RSA. With COVID-19 changing how people use alcohol, policy and safety measures need to adapt in order to reflect a changing landscape.

In order to adapt to the new ways people are buying and consuming alcohol, we urge the Queensland government to enforce OLGR RSA monitoring compliance checks at the point of delivery, to prevent the sale of alcohol to underage or unduly intoxicated persons.

## Section 2 - Managing availability, price and promotion

### **3. Spearhead advocacy efforts at the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum to introduce a nationally consistent minimum unit price on alcohol.**

More than half of Australians (59%) believe that governments should ensure that alcohol products are not sold below the price of bottled water or soft drinks <sup>44</sup>.

Cheaper alcohol results in higher rates of consumption, including heavier drinking, occasional drinking, underage drinking and higher levels of alcohol harm. This harm affects the drinker, their partners, their children and communities, <sup>45</sup> with Queenslanders paying the cost of this harm through health, police, social services and court costs.

Enabled by weaknesses in Australia's system of alcohol taxation, in particular the Wine Equalisation Tax, big-box outlets are selling high volumes of discounted and cheap bulk alcohol – the choice of Australia's heaviest drinkers and pre-loading young people <sup>46</sup>. Low cost alcohol disproportionately harms these groups, who are more likely to seek out cheaper alcohol than low or moderate drinkers <sup>47</sup>.

Pricing controls, such as minimum unit pricing (MUP), have been identified by the World Health Organisation as some of the most effective measures to reduce harm caused by alcohol. MUP effectively reduces harms among the heaviest consumers, while limiting ordinary drinkers who are consuming at a moderate or low level <sup>48,49</sup>.

MUP has been successfully introduced internationally with resultant reductions in alcohol related harms in countries including Scotland, Canada, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine <sup>50,51</sup>. Locally, the Northern Territory introduced MUP in October 2018 and reports assessing the impact have found reductions in alcohol-related road crashes causing injury or

fatality, assaults, ambulance attendances, emergency department presentations and episodes of protective custody<sup>52</sup>. This has all been achieved while having no significant impact on tourism or the number of liquor licences in the NT <sup>53</sup>.

A nationally consistent approach would be the most effective solution, avoiding any disparity between the states. However, as outlined in the National Alcohol Strategy 2019 – 2028, the responsibility of MUP lies with state and territory governments<sup>54</sup>.

We therefore urge the Queensland government to spearhead advocacy for introducing a nationally consistent MUP at the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum.

#### **4. Tighten restrictions on alcohol advertising on government buildings and implement a complete ban immediately.**

We applaud the Queensland government for its move to ban alcohol advertising on government buildings and government owned infrastructure. This important move acknowledges the contradiction of governments allowing alcohol advertisements on their physical sites while simultaneously promoting public health messages about the harms of alcohol.

However, information provided by the Queensland Government states that existing contracts for advertising on building won't be changed until they come up for renewal, and some are in place for 5 – 20 years<sup>55</sup>. This includes over 2,000 government owned billboards and advertising spaces including those next to major highways, outside hospitals (such as Princess Alexandra Hospital, Queen Elizabeth II Hospital and the Prince Charles Hospital), overlooking schools and recreation spaces where weekend sport is played<sup>56</sup>.

This decision delays the community benefits of this policy. In this period, the harms of these advertisement are both ongoing and long lasting.

Although there are regulations in place so that alcohol industry cannot directly target children and teenagers, young people inevitably see and are impacted by the advertisements placed in and around public spaces. These advertisements lead to the earlier onset of alcohol consumption in young people (often under 18), and to increased alcohol consumption if they are already consumers <sup>57</sup>.

In strong support of this policy, we urge the government to implement a complete ban immediately and remove all alcohol advertisements from government owned buildings and infrastructure.

## SECTION 3 - Promoting healthier communities

### **5. Develop and initiate a comprehensive, evidence-based community campaign on the direct link between alcohol consumption and chronic disease, including at least seven types of cancer, mental health and heart disease.**

Australians in general have a poor understanding of the health risks associated with alcohol, many unaware that the amount of alcohol they are consuming is likely to cause them serious health problems in the future<sup>5859</sup>. Consumption of alcohol leads to preventable deaths and is causally linked to many chronic diseases including cancer, mental health problems and heart disease<sup>60</sup>.

Even small quantities of alcohol consumption increases the risk of cancer, and increase in dosage leads to an increased chance of serious health issues. Despite this, 32% of Australian males believe that three or more standard drinks a day doesn't put them at risk of serious health problems, even though this is classified as a dangerously excessive amount<sup>61</sup>. In Australia, chronic diseases resulting from alcohol consumption cause almost 4,200 deaths a year<sup>62</sup>.

Social marketing can influence health behaviours and health outcomes<sup>636465</sup>. Developing research informed campaigns with messaging that address the factors influencing people's behaviour will create the best opportunity for success<sup>66</sup>.

As well as targeting segments of the community who are at high risk of harm from alcohol, it is also important that parents be made aware of the serious health implications of supplying alcohol to children during their formative years of development.

Alcohol that is consumed by children can have long term, harmful impacts including damage to the developing brain impacting problem solving skills, performance at school and work as well as potentially affecting their body, mood and mental health<sup>67</sup>.

Consumers have a right to be accurately informed about risks associated with alcohol, just like any other products of the food and beverage industry. More than 4 in 5 Australians believe that citizens have a right to know about alcohol related health harms<sup>68</sup>. Further, 70 per cent of Australians believe that the alcohol industry has no place in the development of alcohol policy due to their conflict of interest<sup>69</sup>.

We urge the Queensland Government to develop and initiate a comprehensive, evidence-based community campaign founded on the latest research about the link between alcohol consumption and chronic disease.

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## QCAA 2020 QUEENSLAND ELECTION PLATFORM

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