

Oh, we've got some bloody good drinkers in the Northern Territory

**The response of the criminal justice system to alcohol-related harm in Central Australia**

Russell Goldflam



*R v Green* SCNT 20823606 (Sentence) Riley, J 

20 February 2009

It seems plain that something must be done to curb the level of alcohol consumption in Tennant Creek. The courts regularly hear evidence of alcohol being consumed in Tennant Creek in quantities beyond comprehension. It seems that the excessive consumption of alcohol continues for so long as alcohol is available. People drink until they can drink no more and then get up the next day and start all over again. The frequency with which drunken violence occurs is unacceptable and the level of violence is likewise completely unacceptable.

For the good of the town, for the good of the victims, for the good of the offenders and for the good of the innocent children of Tennant Creek, it seems to me obvious that a system must be devised to limit the amount of alcohol made available to the people whose lives are being devastated in this way and to educate and rehabilitate those already abusing alcohol. The people of the Northern Territory cannot sit on their hands and allow what is occurring in Tennant Creek to continue. I accept that it is a complex issue but it is an issue that must be addressed and must be addressed sooner rather than later. Hard decisions must be taken.

**WHAT'S THE DAMAGE?**

# Australia: Alcohol consumption and harm

**Table 1:** Per capita consumption of alcohol selected countries\*

RANK	COUNTRY	PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION†
1	Luxembourg	15.56
2	Ireland	13.69
7	Germany	11.99
8	UK	11.75
10	Spain	11.68
14	France	11.43
20	Russian Federation	10.32
23	Netherlands	9.68
24	New Zealand	9.68
30	Australia	9.02

\* Values are for various years before and including 2003

† Per capita alcohol consumption (litres of pure alcohol) among adults

Source: WHO 2008(14)

Current approximate annual adult (> 15 years) consumption in litres of pure alcohol:

World:	5
Australia	10
NT	15
Alice Springs	20

The total social cost of the harmful consumption of alcohol is estimated to be more than \$15 billion each year.(4) The majority of these costs are for tangible social costs such as crime (\$1.6 billion), health (\$1.9 billion), productivity in the workplace (\$3.5 billion), productivity in the home (\$1.5 billion) and road accidents (\$2.2 billion) (see Table 4).

**Table 4:** Estimated social costs of alcohol abuse, Australia, 2004–2005

TYPE OF COST	\$M
Reduction in workforce and absenteeism	3,579
Labour in the household	1,571
Medical	541
Hospital	662
Nursing homes	401
Pharmaceuticals	298
Ambulances	75
Road accidents	2,202
Police	747
Criminal courts	86
Prisons	142
Property	67
Insurance administration	14
Productivity of prisoners	368
Resources used in abusive consumption	1,689
Loss of life	4,135
Pain and suffering (road accidents)	354

Source: Collins & Lapsley 2008(4)

## Stabbing rate in the Alice (ABC Radio) PM - 4 April 2008 (part 1)

ANNE BARKER: Not even a year ago, Alice Springs was the stabbing capital of the world. Over a seven year period, surgeons at the local hospital treated 1,550 stabbing victims. That's more than 200 a year, or one stabbing every two days.

The head of surgery Jacob Ollapallil, says 100 per cent of victims are Aboriginal and more than half are women, many of them stabbed with a kitchen knife to the upper thigh.

JACOB OLLAPALLIL: The number of women patients involved, or victims involved, are very high. Most of the studies reported elsewhere, it is usually the victim is a young adult male, but in our case, more than half are female. It's also point to the high incidence of domestic violence in Alice Springs.

ANNE BARKER: The huge rate of stabbings coincides directly with the appalling level of alcohol consumption in Central Australia.

Drunkenness is the number one factor behind the whole spectrum of violence in Alice Springs - from stabbings to homicides to suicide.



**CORRECTIVE SERVICES**

AUSTRALIA

EMBARGO: 11.30AM (CANBERRA TIME) THURS 19 MAR 2009

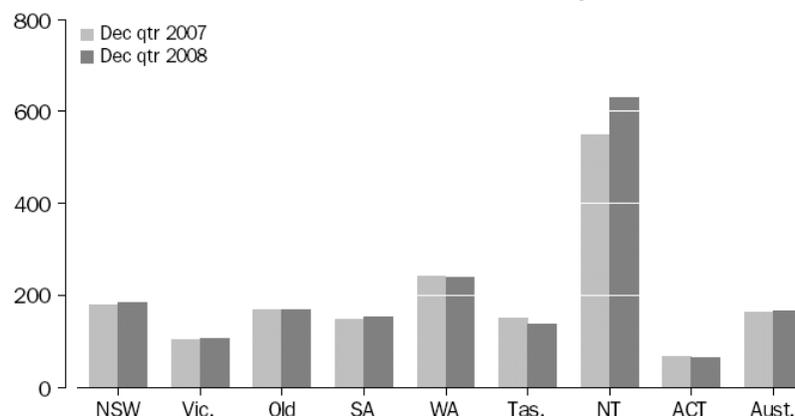
The Northern Territory attained 1,000 prisoners per day in December 08

70 – 90% of assaults in Alice Springs are recorded as alcohol related

In Alice Springs the risk of a woman being assaulted is 24 times higher if she is indigenous

Rates per 100,000 adults

AVERAGE DAILY IMPRISONMENT RATE(a), By states and territories



(a) Rate per 100,000 adult population.

Nationally, the December quarter 2008 average daily imprisonment rate was 166 prisoners per 100,000 adult population, an increase of 2% from the December quarter 2007 (163 prisoners). The Northern Territory had the highest imprisonment rate (629 prisoners per 100,000 adult population), followed by Western Australia (240) and New South Wales (184).

The Northern Territory recorded the largest proportional increase in imprisonment rates from the December quarter 2007 (14%). The largest proportional decrease over the same period was recorded in Tasmania (7%).

# Deaths caused by alcohol in the indigenous community

The number of deaths directly related to alcohol among Indigenous people in Central Australia during the three years 2004 to 2006 was around 31 times higher than the national average during this period for all Australians.

## Moving Beyond the Restrictions: The Evaluation of the Alice Springs Alcohol Management Plan

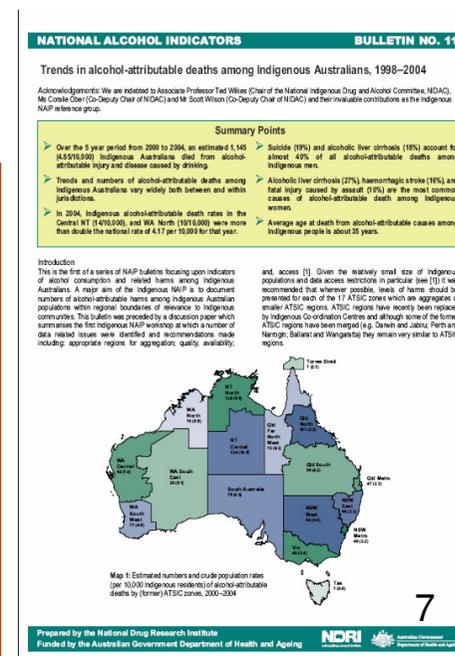


## National Drug Research Institute

PREVENTING HARMFUL DRUG USE IN AUSTRALIA

Suicide (19%) and alcoholic liver cirrhosis (18%) account for almost 40% of all alcohol-attributable deaths among Indigenous men.

Alcoholic liver cirrhosis (27%), haemorrhagic stroke (16%), and fatal injury caused by assault (10%) are the most common causes of alcohol-attributable death among Indigenous women.



WHAT'S  
THE RESPONSE?

# **ALCOHOL COURT ACT 2006**

**An Act to establish the Alcohol Court with power to make particular orders in respect of certain offenders with alcohol dependency and to make sentencing orders and ancillary orders in respect of those offenders, and for related matters**

- PART 2 – ALCOHOL COURT
- PART 3 – ALCOHOL INTERVENTION ORDERS
- PART 4 – PROHIBITION ORDERS
- PART 5 – ALCOHOL COURT CLINICIANS AND ASSESSMENT REPORTS

2007-2008: 37 referrals to the Alcohol Court

23 August 2006

**Mr STIRLING (Racing, Gaming and Licensing):**

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The issue of alcohol abuse is one of the most critical matters facing the Territory government... We are successfully walking the fine line between addressing social harmony and ensuring that people can still have a good night out... These amendments will allow the Licensing Commission to make declaration with respect to public places... Where a person contravenes a declaration made for a public restricted area, police will have the power to seize any opened or unopened containers of liquor. Penalties for failure to comply with the public restricted area provisions are forfeiture of the liquor seized and a fine of up to \$500. The offence may also be enforced by a contravention notice or infringement notice... I commend the bill to honourable members.

# Alice Springs Alcohol Management Plan – introduced 1 October 2006

- Supply Reduction
- Demand Reduction
- Harm Reduction

Ongoing monitoring by Alcohol Reference Panel

Evaluation by Menzies School of Health Research

# Supply Restrictions – 1 October 2006



**New Restrictions on  
Takeaway Alcohol in  
Alice Springs**

*from 1 October 2006*

Northern Territory Licensing Commission



Northern Territory Government

- Targets takeaway alcohol – approximately 70% of alcohol sold is takeaway alcohol
- Restricts low priced high alcohol volume products such as cask wine and fortified wine
- Restricts availability of those products to after 6pm – one person per day
- Hours of trade – no takeaway sales Monday to Friday until after 2pm
- Only light beer over the bar before 11:30AM

## Alice Springs Public Restricted Area Decision: 9 May 2007



### Issues highlighted in Licensing Commission decision

Drinking alcohol in this public area without a permit is a serious offence.

- Acknowledged deep concerns and frustration of many Alice Springs residents about liquor abuse issues and public safety
- Anecdotal evidence that the annual migration of visitors from Pitjantjatjara Lands surrounding areas to Port Augusta had declined – with more migration to Alice Springs and Adelaide
- Increased potential for pressure on Town Camps to avoid police intervention
- Two transit camps to be established
- Improvements to Town Camps to be made
- Unless other issues are addressed, supply and harm reduction strategies such as liquor restrictions and dry areas can only partially address the problems.

# Alice Springs Public Restricted Area Declaration: 1 August 2007

## Decision

- Communication strategies
- Adequate policing of Town Camps
- Declared area excludes Whitegate and Namatjira Town Camps
- Subject to complementary measures being addressed
- Sufficient community Night Patrols to properly service Town Camps
- Adequate access to phones by camp residents
- Assistance to residents in public housing to enable them to declare their houses dry
- Assistance to town camps if they wanted to be declared dry
- Dedicated officer to co-ordinate the provisions and implementation of supporting complementary measures



# The Northern Territory Emergency Response

## Alcohol restrictions

*The Little Children Are Sacred report said that alcohol abuse was 'destroying communities' and was the 'gravest and fastest growing threat to the safety of children'. Alcohol restrictions were therefore seen as a necessary part of the NTER in order to protect children, make communities safe and create a better future for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.*

### **Description of the current arrangements**

Under the NTER, new laws were introduced:

- to **ban drinking, possessing, supplying or transporting liquor in a prescribed area**, and
- to **monitor take-away sales** across the whole of the Northern Territory.

Licensees currently have to record details of purchases of \$100 or more of take-away liquor (including GST) or more than 5 litres of wine. This includes recording the customer's name and address and where the liquor will be consumed.

**The Northern Territory Government has also introduced legislation to reduce access to alcohol, including extension of 'dry' areas, in some regional centres.**

# Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 (Cth)

## 11 Notice of areas

(1) While an area is a prescribed area, the Commission must, if it is practicable to do so, take all such steps as are, in its opinion, necessary to cause to be posted and to be kept posted at:

- (a) the place where a customary access route enters the area; and
- (b) the customary departure locations for aircraft flying into the area;

a notice:

- (c) stating that it is an offence to bring liquor into, to be in possession or control of liquor or to consume or sell liquor within the area; and
- (d) specifying the possible penalties for the offence.



## **Raided booze goes down the drain**

Almost 700 litres of grog, seized by police in a two-day operation, was poured down the drain at the Alice Springs Police Station on Monday, watched by local media. It was mostly taken from town camps, says Superintendent Sean Parnell. Not all town camps were involved, only those where residents were most concerned about drinking. Sixteen liquor infringement notices were issued; 58 people were taken into protective custody; 10 arrests were made for a range of liquor-related offences, including drink driving.

**Police seize and tip out some 3000 litres of alcohol a month. Alcohol plays a role in 80% of offences dealt with by police,** says Supt Parnell. But it is a “small minority, a core group” who cause most of that work, including violent offences. He puts the number at around 150.



## Photo ID System

An electronic photographic identification system (photo ID) has been implemented in all licensed stores and public hotel takeaway outlets in Alice Springs. From 23 June 2008 all people who purchase takeaway alcohol in these stores will be required to show photo ID.

The photo ID system enables licensees to quickly and easily determine if someone buying alcohol is subject to prohibition or restricted alcohol conditions imposed by the court system. It is hoped that this initiative... will assist in reducing antisocial behaviour caused through heavy drinking...



# Cyclone Tracy done for DUI

EMILY WATKINS

May 6th, 2009

**A MAN named after Cyclone Tracy yesterday became one of the first Territorians to receive an alcohol ignition lock sentence.**

Cy Tracy Bush - whose mother named him after the devastating 1974 cyclone when he was born three days after it flattened Darwin - had his full licence disqualified for two years.

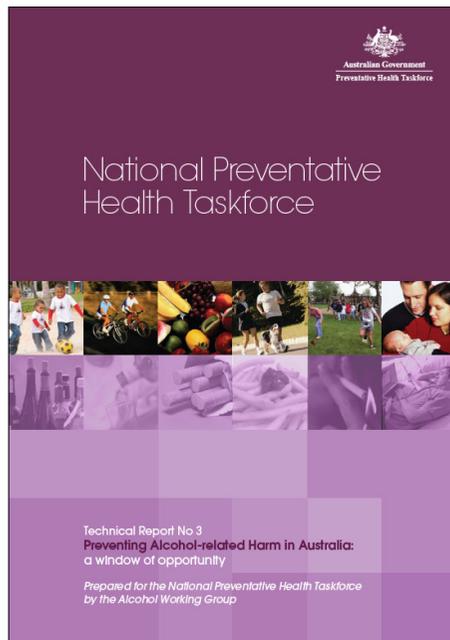
After 12 months, he can apply for an alcohol ignition lock licence for the remaining 12 months or remain disqualified from driving.

Outside court, Bush, 34, said he was not sure if he would apply for the alco-lock. Police prosecutor Justene Dwyer earlier said the alco-lock would cost \$170 to install, \$100 to remove and \$165 a month for rental at the defendant's expense.

"I don't think I'll get it installed - but I'll have to see when the time comes," he said.

# TRIAL AND ERROR

# The Excise Exercise



In the late 1980s, states and territories adopted various forms of licensing for all alcohol sales. As part of this system, most jurisdictions offered low-alcohol beer (less than 3.5% alcohol by volume) for a significant concession in fees. The license fee concession translated into cheaper low-alcohol beer and, in combination with intense market competition in the beer market and the introduction of harm-reduction measures such as random breath testing, created an ideal environment for low-alcohol beer. Producers recognised the benefit of investing considerable developmental and marketing investment into low-alcohol beer. As a consequence, low-alcohol beer increased its sales very significantly and captured approximately 20% of the total Australian beer market.

## **Alcohol Taxation Good For Your Health**

23 March 2000

The report of the first four years of the Northern Territory's *Living With Alcohol* program found that a tax increase of only 5 cents on a standard drink containing more than 3% alcohol contributed to an average reduction in consumption of around 22% per person. In the first four years, a total of \$18 million of the levy raised paid for a broad range of new prevention and treatment programs in the Territory. As a result, 129 lives were saved and 2,100 alcohol-related hospital admissions were prevented, with an associated cost saving in the region of \$124 million.

The impact of the alcohol levy was to raise the price of regular strength beer relative to low strength beer, and to significantly increase the price of cask wine. Both regular strength beer and cask wine - drinks that are normally taxed least - have been closely associated with higher levels of violence, injury and illness. Low strength beer - normally taxed at a higher rate than regular strength beer - has been associated with less harm.

# Ha! The Excise Exercise Extinguished

189 CLR 465]

OF AUSTRALIA

465

466

HIGH COURT

[1997

HA AND ANOTHER..... PLAINTIFFS;

AND

STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES AND OTHERS..... DEFENDANTS.

WALTER HAMMOND & ASSOCIATES PTY LIMITED..... PLAINTIFF;

AND

STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES AND OTHERS..... DEFENDANTS.

*Constitutional Law (Cth) — Duties of excise — Exclusive power of Commonwealth Parliament — State law imposing tobacco wholesalers' and retailers' licence fee — Fee calculated upon value of tobacco sold in period preceding the licence period — Validity — The Constitution (63 & 64 Vict c 12), s 90 — Business Franchise Licences (Tobacco) Act 1987 (NSW).*

*Constitutional Law (Cth) — Judicial power — Prospective overruling.*

The *Business Franchise Licences (Tobacco) Act* 1987 (NSW) imposed a licence fee of \$10 on the retail and wholesale sale of tobacco and an additional fee calculated by reference to a prescribed percentage of the value of tobacco sold in a period preceding the licence period. The prescribed percentage was increased from time to time by legislative amendment from 30 per cent at the commencement of operation of the Act to 100 per cent as from 28 June 1995.

*Held*, by Brennan CJ, McHugh, Gummow and Kirby JJ, Dawson, Toohey and Gaudron JJ dissenting, that the licence fees were duties of excise within s 90 of the Constitution and hence were invalid.

(a) A duty of excise is an inland tax on a step in the production, manufacture, sale or distribution of goods, whether of foreign or domestic origin.

*Parton v Milk Board (Vict)* (1949) 80 CLR 229, affirmed.

Observations in *Mathews v Chicory Marketing Board (Vict)* (1938) 60 CLR 263 at 291-304; *Bolton v Madsen* (1963) 110 CLR 264 at 271-273; *Philip Morris Ltd v Commissioner of Business Franchises (Vict)* (1989) 167 CLR 399 at 445; and *Capital Duplicators Pty Ltd v Australian Capital Territory [No 2]* (1993) 178 CLR 561 at 590-591, approved.

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*Dennis Hotels Pty Ltd v Victoria* (1960) 104 CLR 529 at 540, considered.

(b) An amount equal to 75 or 100 per cent of the value of tobacco sold during a relevant period could not be regarded as a mere fee for a licence required as an element in a scheme for regulatory control of businesses selling tobacco. Where a State tax imposed on the seller of goods and calculated on the value or quantity of goods sold is so substantial that it cannot be characterised as a mere licence fee, the application of s 90 must result in its invalidity.

*Dennis Hotels Pty Ltd v Victoria* (1960) 104 CLR 529 and *Dickenson's Arcade Pty Ltd v Tasmania* (1974) 130 CLR 177, considered.

*Philip Morris Ltd v Commissioner of Business Franchises (Vict)* (1989) 167 CLR 399 and *Coastace Pty Ltd v New South Wales* (1989) 167 CLR 503, overruled.

*H C Sleigh Ltd v South Australia* (1977) 136 CLR 475, doubted.

(c) The view that alcohol and tobacco are commodities that are in a special category for the purposes of s 90 should be rejected.

*Per* Dawson, Toohey and Gaudron JJ (dissenting). A State tax which does not fall selectively upon imported goods or locally produced or manufactured goods and does not discriminate against interstate goods offends against none of the prohibitions imposed by the Constitution.

*Held*, further, by the whole Court, that the Court had no power to overrule cases prospectively.

*Rola Co (Australia) Pty Ltd v The Commonwealth* (1944) 69 CLR 185 at 203 and *Precision Data Holdings Ltd v Wills* (1991) 173 CLR 167 at 188, applied.

CASES STATED pursuant to the *Judiciary Act* 1903 (Cth), s 18.

Ngo Ngo Ha and Sakhieng Lim sued the State of New South Wales, Bruce Buchanan, the Chief Commissioner of Business Franchise Licences (Tobacco) for that State, and a delegate of the Chief Commissioner, in the High Court claiming a declaration that various provisions of the *Business Franchise Licences (Tobacco) Act* 1987 (NSW) were invalid on the ground that the licence fee levied by them was a duty of excise which, by virtue of s 90 of the Constitution, was beyond the power of the Parliament of the State of New South Wales to impose. The plaintiffs also sought a declaration that notices of assessment dated 4 September 1995 issued to them pursuant to the Act were void. Brennan CJ stated a case for the consideration of the Full Court. The case was in substance as follows: 5. At all material times the plaintiffs sold goods, including tobacco and tobacco products, from their respective stores at Cabramatta and Hurstville. 6. In the course of carrying on their businesses the plaintiffs sold by retail tobacco products to members of the public, not being overseas travellers, seeking to purchase such items. 8. The plaintiffs were not the holders of retailers', or any other, licences under the Act at the relevant times.

9. The defendants claim that by reason of s 30(1) of the Act each 23

See Case Note: Halliday N, [1998] SydLRev 7

# Restricting supply(1): the 2002 trial

Beverage	Pre-Trial		Trial	
	Litres	% of market	Litres	% of market
<b>Cask Wine</b>	<b>109,815</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>18,725</b>	<b>4.0</b>
Bottled Wine	53,905	12.1	53,098	11.3
<b>Fortified</b>	<b>10,351</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>101,209</b>	<b>21.5</b>
Cider	5,853	1.3	5,169	1.1
Spirits (standard)	55,381	12.4	64,661	13.7
Spirits (mixed)	15,087	3.4	22,955	4.9
Full Strength Beer	160,373	36.0	159,285	33.9
Mid Strength Beer	14,679	3.3	24,832	5.3
Light Beer	20,645	4.6	20,491	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>446,089</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>470,782</b>	<b>100.0</b>

# Restricting supply(2): the 2006 trial

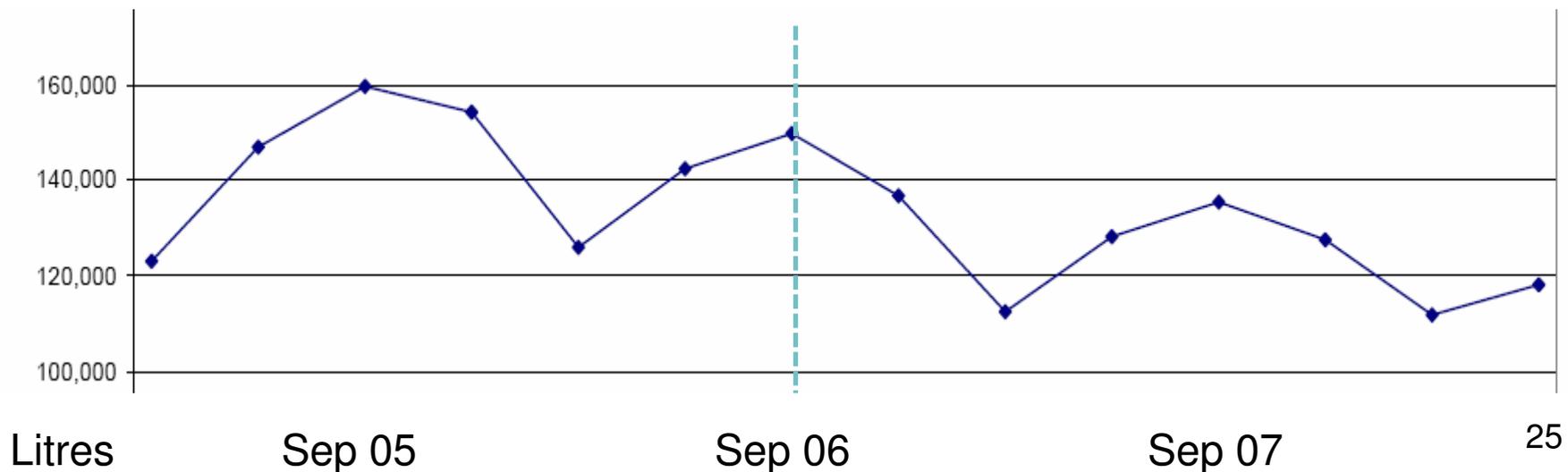
## Alice Springs consumption trends, by sale of litres of pure alcohol

Year	March	June	Sep	Dec
2004				145,370
2005	123,102	146,995	159,744	154,338
2006	125,980	142,430	148,829	136,800
2007	112,510	128,277	135,482	127,606
2008	111,853	118,143	[estimated 123,500]	[estimated 117,000]

Since current supply restrictions started:

- For each quarter, consumption has been lower than for the corresponding period in either of the previous 2 years

- Consumption has decreased 18%



## Alice Springs homicides compared to alcohol consumption

<b>Period</b>	<b>Alice Springs homicides (police figures)</b>	<b>Alice Springs Alcohol Consumption ('000 litres)</b>
1/10/04-30/9/05	13	575,211
1/10/05-30/9/06	6	571,577
1/10/06-30/9/07	6	513,069
1/10/07–30/6/08	2	480,000 (est.)

- Notes:
1. Raw figures are too low to establish statistical significance.
  2. DoJ figures vary from police figures because of different definition of 'Alice Springs'.

## Alice Springs suicides compared to alcohol consumption

<b>Period</b>	<b>Suicides</b>	<b>Indigenous Suicides</b>	<b>Non - Indigenous Suicides</b>	<b>Alcohol Consumption ('000 litres)</b>
<b>1/10/02-30/9/03</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>501,147</b>
<b>1/10/03-30/9/04</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>538,756</b>
<b>1/10/04-30/9/05</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>575,211</b>
<b>1/10/05-30/9/06</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>571,577</b>
<b>1/10/06-30/9/07</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>513,069</b>
<b>1/10/07-30/9/08</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>480,000 (est.)</b>

# Alice Springs non-fatal assaults compared to alcohol consumption

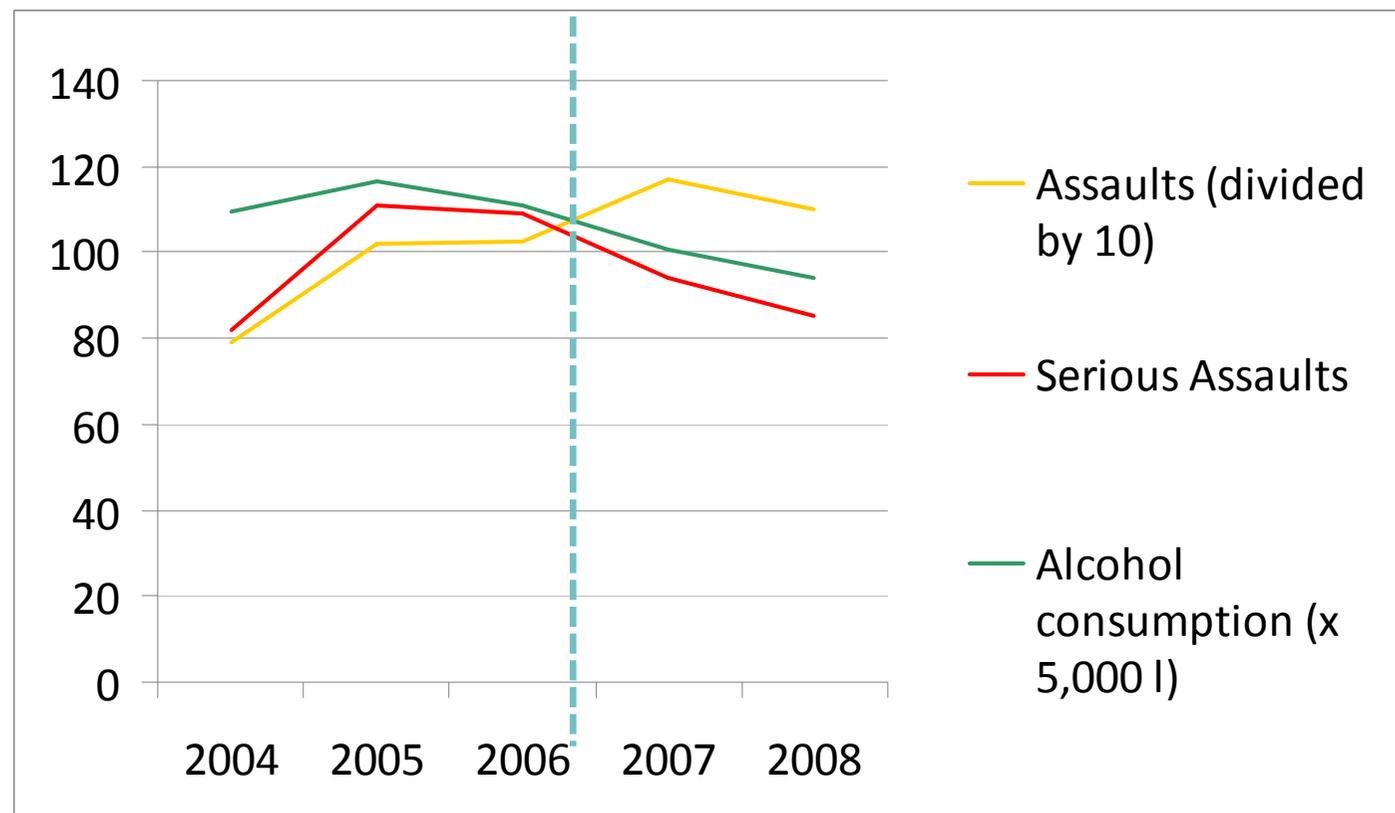
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Minor Assaults</b>	791	1023 <sup>2</sup>	1026	1171 <sup>3</sup>	1100
<b>'Serious' assaults<sup>1</sup></b>	82	111	109	94	85
<b>Alcohol consumption</b>	547,869	584,179	554,039	503,275	470,496 (est.)

Notes:

1. ie assaults causing bodily, grievous or serious harm

2. Violent Harm Reduction Strategy commenced: increased reporting

3. PROMIS system enhanced: increased recording



## Stabbing rate in the Alice (ABC Radio) PM - 4 April 2008 (Part 2)

But since tough new alcohol restrictions were introduced, combined with last year's federal intervention, things have begun to turn around and Dr Jacob says this year alone, surgeons have seen the number of stabbings fall by 50 per cent.

JACOB OLLAPALLIL: Really, very low now. For the last two, three weeks we had only about five or six cases.

ANNE BARKER: So, you think that it has fallen dramatically?

JACOB OLLAPALLIL: Oh, yes. It has been a dramatic improvement.

ANNE BARKER: Did the drop in stabbings coincide with the beginning of these alcohol restrictions?

JACOB OLLAPALLIL: Yes. Very clear and last week we didn't have any single one.

ABC News  
11 June 2009

# The Menzies Evaluation

## ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS REDUCING ASSAULTS

A review of alcohol restrictions in Alice Springs has recommended that existing measures be maintained.

The Northern Territory Government commissioned the Menzies School of Health Research to report on the restrictions, which have been in place since 2006.

It has acknowledged the measures, including identification requirements and takeaway product limits, are unpopular but have led to an 18 per cent drop in consumption.

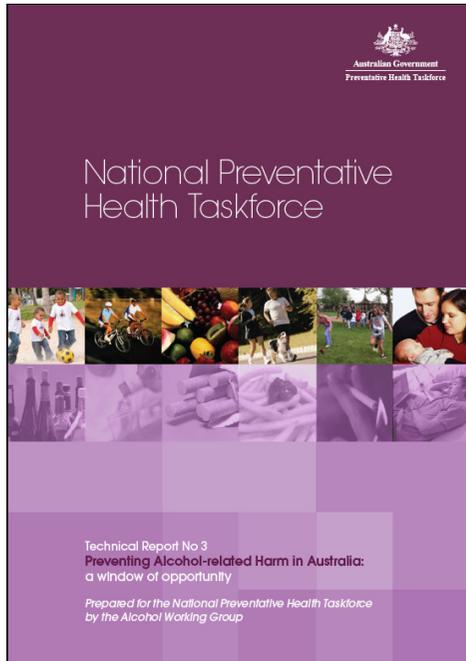
The Alcohol Policy Minister, Kon Vatskalis, says the Government will try to improve community support for the measures through education and consultation.

"Yes, they have been unpopular but the reality is the restrictions have worked."



**WHAT'S NEXT?**

# The Prevention Paradox



The concept of the prevention paradox assists in understanding prevention approaches in the areas of public health and public safety. This approach suggests that more (net) harm may be prevented through universal interventions – focusing on the majority who are less seriously involved in harmful alcohol/drug use, rather than through interventions that only target the smaller proportion of high-risk users.

What's popular doesn't work.  
What works isn't popular.

## Strategies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol

Harmful use of alcohol is one of the main factors contributing to premature deaths and avoidable disease burden worldwide and has a major impact on public health... in 2002 the harmful use of alcohol was estimated to cause about 2.3 million premature deaths worldwide (3.7% of global mortality) and to be responsible for 4.4% of the global burden of disease...

**Addressing the availability of alcohol.** Regulating production and distribution of alcoholic beverages is an effective strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol and in particular to protect young people and other vulnerable groups. Many countries have some restrictions on the sale of alcohol.

**Pricing policies.** Price is an important determinant of alcohol consumption and, in many contexts, of the extent of alcohol-related problems.

# The Lancet Vol 373 April 18 2009

## UK alcohol policy: a costly decision for public health



Photolibrary

Debate is brewing in the UK about the price of alcohol. According to a survey by the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Nursing published on April 8, doctors and nurses who treat alcohol-related harm in the UK believe that public health campaigns are not working and that increased alcohol prices would be better at reducing consumption. The survey asked 205 experts (gastroenterologists, hepatologists, acute physicians, and nurses) their opinions about the UK Government's alcohol-control policies. 81% said that, if alcohol was more expensive, consumption would decrease. 84% believed that public health campaigns were not effective.

Their views accurately represent the evidence-base for effective alcohol-control policies. Laws that regulate the price and availability of alcohol are effective at reducing drink-related harm, whereas education and information programmes, although important, do not reduce the harms caused by alcohol. Their opinions also correspond with those of the Chief Medical Officer for England, Liam Donaldson, who this year, in his yearly report, called for a

£0.50 minimum price per unit to be set for alcohol sold in off-licences and supermarkets. This policy would lead to 3393 fewer deaths, 97 900 fewer hospital admissions, 296 900 fewer sick days, and a benefit of nearly £1 billion per year, according to Donaldson.

But the call for a price increase on alcohol has fallen on deaf ears. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown has flatly rejected the minimum price-per-unit proposal as unfair to the "responsible, sensible, majority of moderate drinkers", even though Donaldson's report states that "price increases generally reduce heavy drinkers' consumption by a greater proportion than moderate drinkers' consumption".

As yet, no European country has a minimum price-per-unit policy, although the Scottish Government is considering it. If introduced in the UK, the scheme would signal good news for the population's health and for the public purse, and money saved by the scheme could be put into health services. Ignoring the evidence on price increases may prove a popular political decision for Brown, but it will be a costly one for public health. ■ *The Lancet*

For the Royal Colleges' survey see <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/files/Survey-Alcohol-Treatment-Services-Summary-RCP-RCN.pdf>

For Liam Donaldson's report see [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/AnnualReports/DH\\_096206](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/AnnualReports/DH_096206)

# Changing Scotland's Relationship with Alcohol: A Framework for Action

4 March 2009

## Annex B - Extract from *Independent Review of the effects of Alcohol Pricing and Promotion, based on modelling work for England, by SchARR, University of Sheffield*

### Key findings for England for a minimum price of 40p per unit:

- Overall weekly consumption reduces by -2.6%.
- Consumption changes are greatest for harmful drinkers (-3.15 units per week).
- All-age hazardous drinkers have smaller reductions (-1.8%) but the absolute scale of reduction is much larger (-0.47 units per week).
- Moderate drinkers are affected in a small way (-0.07 units per week).
- Effects on health are estimated to be substantial with **deaths estimated to reduce by 157 within the first year and a full effect after 10 years of 1,381**. Again deaths are differentially distributed across the groups, with 2 saved in year 1 for 11-18 year olds but 48 for hazardous, 98 for harmful and 12 for moderate drinkers. Illness also decreased with an estimated reduction of 2,900 acute and 1,500 chronic illnesses within year 1.
- **Hospital admissions are estimated to reduce by 6,300 in year 1 and a full effect after 10 years of 40,800 avoided admissions per annum.**
- Healthcare service costs are estimated to change by £25m in year 1, with a Quality Adjusted Life Year ( QALY) gain valued at £63 million.
- **Crime is estimated to fall by 16,000 offences overall.**
- **The harm avoided in terms of victim quality of life is valued at £21 million.**
- **Criminal Justice system costs are estimated to reduce by £17 million.**
- Workplace harms are reduced by 12,400 fewer unemployed people and 100,400 fewer sick days.



## Alcohol taxation policy in Australia: public health imperatives for action

A statement by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians

Steven J Skov, for the Royal Australasian College of Physicians Alcohol Advisory Group

### Abstract

•The Australian Government's "alcopops" tax legislation will soon be voted on by the Senate. This is the first time in memory that an alcohol taxation measure has been informed principally by public health concerns.

•Much debate surrounds the utility of alcohol taxation as a measure to reduce alcohol-related harm. However, **the harms resulting from alcohol misuse in Australia are at unacceptable levels and action to reduce them is overdue.**

•**There is good evidence from Australia and internationally that taxation and price measures are among the most effective and cost-effective in reducing alcohol consumption and related harms.** Recent alcohol sales data give an early indication that the alcopops tax is being effective in reducing consumption.

•Current alcohol tax policy is unwieldy and not well directed towards improving public health. A proportion of tax revenues dedicated to alcohol programs would assist public acceptance of the measures.

•A broad review of alcohol taxation policy is needed as part of a comprehensive approach to alcohol problems in Australia.

# National Preventative Health Taskforce



Technical Report No 3  
Preventing Alcohol-related Harm in Australia:  
a window of opportunity

*Prepared for the National Preventative Health Taskforce  
by the Alcohol Working Group*

It appears that the most likely model that can effectively reduce alcohol-related harm would be based on an across-the-board excise model that also includes regulating the floor (minimum) price, especially with regard to small containers. The excise tax could be scaled within different product types to ensure there were strong financial incentives for the production of lower alcohol products (for example, low-strength beer, wine and RTDs), and so that the highest-risk alcohol products (i.e. spirits, which can more easily cause overdose) are taxed at an appropriately higher rate. In combination with a volumetric taxation system, in which all products are taxed according to alcohol content, all products could effectively have a floor price based on their alcohol content in a 300ml container.

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## Wine discounting 'targets' Aborigines By Paul Toohey

WOOLWORTHS liquor outlets in Darwin are selling **cleanskin wine at \$3.97 a bottle** in a move the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation claims is targeted at Aboriginal drinkers. The new chairman of the AERF, Scott Wilson, says heavy discounting by Woolworths is doing nothing to curtail Aboriginal binge-drinking. "You'd think in the Northern Territory they'd definitely be targeting Aboriginal people, and people from a low socio-economic background," said Mr Wilson. "It's almost as cheap as a big bottle of Coke." The \$3.97 cleanskins had until last week also been available in Alice Springs and Katherine -- two towns affected by cheap wine and violence.

Standard drink based floor pricing:  
At a dollar a drink, a 24 pack carton of heavy beer sells for not less than \$36.00, and a bottle of wine sells for not less than \$7.00.



## Future arrangements

...The Government believes that the alcohol restrictions in their current form, including bans, should be retained for the immediate future. But the Government is prepared to consider modifying these restrictions to better reflect the circumstances in individual communities ...

The level of alcohol restrictions in each community or region could be set by taking into account: community views, evidence on the level of *alcohol-related harm* in individual communities or regions; and community-developed alcohol restrictions

including Alcohol Management Plans. This model would require wide community consultation and the rigorous collection of evidence about conditions in communities...

The Government proposes to remove the requirement for a licensee to record the sale of take-away liquor over \$100 or more than 5 litres of wine, as this has proven to be impractical and has not been as effective as intended. Current exemptions from the alcohol restrictions relating to tourism, recreational boating and commercial fishing will not be changed.<sup>39</sup>

27 April 2009



By 2030, dramatically reduce the amount of alcohol Territorians consume, especially among those who drink at risky levels. There will be reduced harm to Territorians including fewer road accidents, assaults and alcohol-related injuries.

There will be more targeted social marketing on the impacts that drinking has on the 'Territory lifestyle'. There may be increased alcohol supply restrictions. 40

# TURN DOWN THE TAP

Alcohol kills more people  
in Central Australia than  
anywhere else in the country



February 2009

## Why think about a *Turn Down The Tap* rally now?

Since 2006 when the current alcohol measures came into place there has been a 14% decline in alcohol consumption, a reduction in alcohol related violence and hospital admission in Alice Springs. In spite of this great success Alice Springs is still drinking at a rate more than 50% higher than the national average and there are still many alcohol related harms that affect families and the wider community. More can be done to further reduce the quantity of alcohol available in Alice Springs and the harm it causes.

In 2007 and 2008 concerned remote community members from Yuendumu, Kiwirrikurra, Areyonga, Nyirrpi, Ntaria and representatives from communities across the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands (from NT, SA and WA) joined together with community members from town camps and organisations in Alice Springs to tell the government and media that something had to be done to reduce the numbers of people being hurt and killed because of alcohol. CAYLUS and NPY are working together with remote communities and organisations to organise a 2009 rally to lobby government for further action and development of the alcohol management plan.



**▼ Alcohol supply reduction**

- 1.Reduce the number and types of liquor outlets**
- 2.Reduce trading hours**
- 3.Ban or tightly restrict takeaway sales**
- 4. Restrict cheap alcohol products and adopt a minimum price benchmark**

**▼ Demand reduction: encourage responsible drinking**

- 5. Align Centrelink payments to restricted alcohol days**
- 6. Introduce permit systems to encourage responsible drinking**
- 7. NT-wide ban on alcohol advertising and promotions**
- 8. Need for increased treatment services**
- 9. Integrating Alcohol & Other Drug and Mental Health services in Primary Health Care**
- 10. Return of alcohol sales revenue into alcohol programs**

**▼ Harm Minimisation: community-based services and facilities**

- 11. Enhanced night patrols and policing in remote communities**
- 12. Aboriginal Social Clubs**

## **▼ Develop effective alcohol management strategies**

### **13. Develop alcohol management strategies**

### **14. Reform of the Licensing Commission and *NT Liquor Act***

Reform of the Licensing Commission and the *NT Liquor Act* is required to ensure that appropriate community input, evidence-based measures and powers of control are achieved. This includes:

- Greater general community and Aboriginal representation on the Commission;
- Toughening sanctions against outlets that breach their license conditions;
- Powers for the Commission to inquire into and promulgate Local or Regional Liquor Supply Plans, and to inquire into alcohol-related matters and recommend Alcohol Policy Guidelines;
- Establishing harm minimisation audits for liquor licenses;
- Legislating to provide Aboriginal community leaders with powers to control problem drinkers.
- Ensuring that the Department of Health and Community Services is required to give an opinion on each application;
- Ensuring that objections can be entered by all interested people or parties and not simply by people or parties in the vicinity of the proposed new license.

### **15. Establish evidence-based Territory-wide standards**

### **16. Better data collection and evidence reporting**

### **17. Reform of the Federal Emergency Intervention alcohol measures**

Rivers of grog...



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