



## The need for a Framework to prevent alcohol-related family violence

In recent years Australian governments have committed to taking action to reduce family violence. This is exemplified by the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (National Plan). The National Plan was the first time that governments committed to coordinated action. Australian governments have also undertaken to protect children through the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020: Protecting Children is Everyone's Business*.

Governments should be congratulated for taking these steps towards addressing family violence. However, these plans rarely consider alcohol and its contribution to family violence. Most also stop well short of outlining specific actions to reduce alcohol-related family violence and none include a focus on primary prevention initiatives that target the physical availability, economic availability or promotion of alcohol. This is a significant failing of Australia's response to family violence to date and needs to change.

This *National framework for action to prevent alcohol-related family violence* (Framework) is that change. The Framework focuses on this crucial gap by highlighting why action must be taken to prevent alcohol-related family violence.

The Framework proposes policies and programs that Australian governments can implement which will have a real and tangible impact on preventing and reducing alcohol-related family violence.

**“Up until now, the role of alcohol has not been adequately recognised in national or state and territory plans and strategies to address the issue. This is despite the fact that alcohol is significantly implicated in family violence.”**

Extract from the Framework foreword by Rosie Batty, Australian of the Year and Founder of the Luke Batty Foundation, and Michael Thorn, Chief Executive of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE).

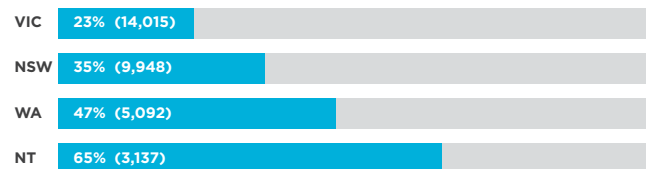


# Alcohol's involvement in family violence

Alcohol is a significant contributor to family violence in Australia. In just one year (2011) there were 29,684 incidents of alcohol-related family violence in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Alcohol-related family violence accounts for between 23 per cent and 65 per cent of all family violence incidents reported to police.

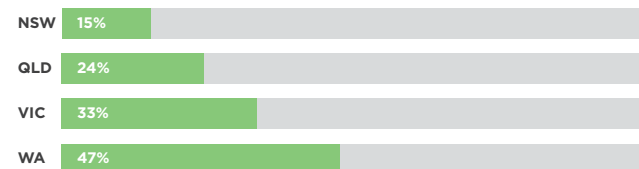
Between 2002-03 and 2011-12, 36 per cent of perpetrators of intimate partner homicides used alcohol. Alcohol is also implicated in 15 to 47 per cent of child protection cases.

## Alcohol's involvement in family violence



Sources: Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (2012-2013); NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2013-2014); Northern Territory Department of the Attorney-General and Justice (2013); Western Australia Police submission to the review of the Liquor Control Act (2011-2012).

## Alcohol's involvement in child maltreatment



Source: Laslett, AM., Mugavin, J. Jiang, H., Manton, E., Callinan, S., MacLean, S., and Room R. (2015). *The hidden harm: Alcohol's impact on children and families*. Canberra: Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, FARE. NSW (2006-07); Queensland (2007); Victoria (2001-05); WA (2000).

## Alcohol-related family violence: Why we should act



### ALCOHOL IN THE COMMUNITY

The increased physical availability of alcohol contributes to increases in family violence.  
 The economic availability of alcohol and promotion of alcohol contributes to increased alcohol consumption and a range of health and social harms.  
 Societal views about alcohol, including that alcohol leads to, or excuses violence, contributes to the normalisation of excessive alcohol use, aggression and family violence.

### WHY WE SHOULD ACT

Family violence does not occur in a vacuum. Community and societal factors, including the availability of alcohol, contributes to this violence and must be addressed to achieve systemic and generational change.

### ALCOHOL USE BY PERPETRATORS

Alcohol increases the severity and incidence of family violence.  
 Alcohol makes perpetrators less aware of physical force and less concerned with consequences.  
 Alcohol is used as an excuse for violence.  
 Alcohol is used as a form of intimidation and control and alcohol use may indicate to partners that violence is likely to occur.

### WHY WE SHOULD ACT

Alcohol is used by perpetrators of family violence.

### ALCOHOL USE BY VICTIMS

Alcohol is used as a coping mechanism to deal with family violence and trauma.  
 Alcohol excludes victims from being able to access support services.  
 Alcohol increases the likelihood of losing custody of children.  
 Alcohol impairs the victim's ability to implement safety strategies when violence occurs and increases their vulnerability to violence.

### WHY WE SHOULD ACT

Alcohol is a barrier to seeking or receiving support for family violence.

### ALCOHOL'S IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Alcohol impedes a parent's capacity to care for their children and protect them from harm.  
 Alcohol is often part of a range of issues impacting on the health and welfare of families.  
 Alcohol is responsible for some children being taken into care.

### WHY WE SHOULD ACT

Children notice family violence. Children who experience family violence or child maltreatment can go on to develop a range of problems including alcohol and other drug problems later in their lives.



## Overview of the Framework priority areas

The Framework puts forward 20 actions to prevent alcohol-related family violence across four priority areas. These policies and programs have been developed following an extensive review of the evidence and consultation with experts from the family violence, child protection and public health sectors. The Framework uses a public health model of prevention as its foundation and clearly identifies areas for action in each priority area.

### Priority Area 1: Introduce whole of community action to prevent family violence

This priority area recognises the many factors that impact on the consumption of alcohol. These include the physical availability, economic availability and promotion of alcohol in our society. This priority area recognises that:

- There has been unprecedented growth in the physical availability of alcohol in Australia over the last 15 years, resulting in increases in harms from alcohol, including family violence.<sup>1,2</sup>
- The price of alcohol influences consumption and harms, with lower prices associated with higher consumption and harm.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Alcohol advertising is prolific and the current regulatory structures are not protecting children and young people from alcohol advertising and do not counter sexist advertising content.<sup>5</sup>
- There are no public awareness campaigns or school-based education programs in Australia that adequately integrate the relationship between alcohol and family violence.

### Priority Area 2: Assist people most at risk of family violence through early identification and support

This priority area recognises that particular groups of people are more vulnerable to, and at greater risk of, experiencing family violence and require tailored solutions. It acknowledges that alcohol is part of a constellation of issues impacting on families that include poverty, housing and employment issues. This priority area recognises that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately affected by alcohol misuse, family violence, and alcohol-related family violence.<sup>6</sup>
- Experience of parental alcohol problems and family violence places children and young people at greater risk of future mental health and other issues including alcohol misuse and family violence later in life.<sup>7,8</sup>

### Priority Area 3: Provide support for people affected by family violence and protect them from future harm

This priority area responds to the needs of those who have already been affected by family violence in order to prevent further harm occurring. This priority area recognises that:

- It is essential that both alcohol and other drug and family violence services are available to support people when they need it the most. There is a small window of opportunity to support vulnerable people who want to access these services.
- Currently, integrated and coordinated service models within the alcohol and other drug and family violence sectors in Australia are rare. There is a need to improve service integration to ensure that no one falls through the cracks.
- There is significant funding uncertainty within the sectors, which affects the financial viability and constrains an organisation's ability to plan and offer services. This impacts on both the sector and the community as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

### Priority Area 4: Continue to build the evidence-base by investing in data collection and evaluation

This priority area aims to support all levels of prevention by informing policy makers about the incidence of family violence and the impact that interventions are making. This priority area recognises that:

- Consistent data collection is crucial to understanding the prevalence of alcohol-related family violence.
- Data collection and surveillance is a fundamental tool in the evaluation process. Strong and reliable data enables a more complete analysis of the impacts of alcohol policies on outcomes, allowing for better understanding on how to improve service planning and policy development.

1 Trifonoff, A., Andrew, R., Steenson, T., Nicholas, R. & Roche, A. (2011). *Liquor licensing legislation in Australia: Executive summary*. Adelaide: National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, Flinders University.  
2 Livingston, M. (2011). A longitudinal analysis of alcohol outlet density and domestic violence. *Addiction*, 106(5):919-925.  
3 World Health Organization. (2012). *Addressing the harmful use of alcohol: A guide to developing effective alcohol legislation*. Geneva: World Health Organization.  
4 Wagenaar, A., Salois, M., & Komro, K. (2009). Effects of beverage alcohol price and tax levels on drinking: A meta-analysis of 1003 estimates from 112 studies. *Addiction*, 104: 179-190.  
5 Australian National Preventive Health Agency [ANPHA] (2014). *Draft report: Alcohol Advertising: The effectiveness of current regulatory codes in addressing community concern*. Canberra: ANPHA  
6 Tayton, S., Kaspiew, R., Moore, S. & Campo, M. (2014). *Groups and communities at risk of domestic and family violence: A review and evaluation of domestic and family violence prevention and early intervention services focusing on at-risk groups and communities*. Melbourne Australian Institute of Family Studies p.25.  
7 Richards, K. (2011). Children's exposure to domestic violence in Australia. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice*, no.419. Australian Institute of Criminology.  
8 Burke, S., Schmied, V. & Montrose, M. (2006). *Literature review: Parental alcohol misuse and the impact on children*. Sydney: Centre for Parenting and Research.  
9 Productivity Commission. (2010). *Contribution of the not-for-profit Sector, Research p xxxvi*. Canberra: Productivity Commission.

## Overview of the Framework actions

For each priority area, areas for action have been established to guide the work to be undertaken by Australian governments.

	Primary prevention	Secondary prevention	Tertiary prevention	Research and evaluation
Priority area	1. Introduce whole of community action to prevent family violence	2. Assist people most at risk of family violence through early identification and support	3. Provide support for people affected by family violence and protect them from future harm	4. Continue to build the evidence-base by investing in data collection and evaluation
Target group	Whole population	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and children and young people	People who are victims, witnesses and/or perpetrators of family violence	Whole population
Areas for action	<p>1.1 Reduce the physical availability of alcohol. <i>State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>1.2 Reduce the economic availability of alcohol. <i>Australian Government</i></p> <p>1.3 Regulate the promotion of alcohol. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>1.4 Conduct sustained social marketing campaigns and school-based education on preventing family violence and ensure that the role of alcohol is adequately featured. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p>	<p>2.1 Support family-centred programs for people with alcohol and other drug problems. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>2.2 Conduct screening programs for alcohol in healthcare settings. <i>State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>2.3 Identify and support children and young people at risk of child maltreatment. <i>State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>2.4 Close the gap on the higher prevalence of alcohol-related family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p>	<p>3.1 Facilitate collaboration between alcohol and other drug services and family violence services to ensure a ‘no wrong doors’ approach. <i>State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>3.2 Support and develop viable alcohol and other drug services and family violence services sectors. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>3.3 Ensure that perpetrator programs adequately address the use of alcohol and pilot innovative perpetrator programs. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p>	<p>4.1 Invest in data collection and public reporting of alcohol’s involvement in family violence. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p> <p>4.2 Consistently and systematically invest in the evaluation of policies and programs to prevent alcohol-related family violence. <i>Australian, State and Territory Governments</i></p>

## ABOUT FARE

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol.

Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. More than 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised - making alcohol one of our nation’s greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.

FARE is guided by the World Health Organization’s 2010 *Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol* for stopping alcohol harms through population-based strategies, problem directed policies, and direct interventions.

If you would like to contribute to FARE’s important work, call us on (02) 6122 8600 or email [info@fare.org.au](mailto:info@fare.org.au).