

Personal Submission

Inquiry into Alcohol and Other Drugs

Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sports

Name

Kathryn Elliott

25 November 2024

The Committee Secretary

Federal Government Inquiry on the Health Impacts of Alcohol & Other
Drugs

Dear Committee Members,

**Submission to the Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Alcohol & Other
Drugs**

My name is Kathryn Elliott, and I am writing to you as an alcohol mindset coach dedicated to helping individuals, particularly professionals, transform their relationship with alcohol. My work stems from my personal journey of overcoming problematic drinking and my professional mission to create healthier workplace cultures.

For decades, I struggled with binge drinking, which kept me stuck in a cycle of shame, loneliness and unable to access my potential. I witnessed firsthand the significant role corporate drinking culture played in normalising and perpetuating harmful habits, delaying my ability to seek change.

I believe that workplaces have a unique opportunity to address this issue. By integrating targeted education into well-being programs, businesses can support employees in making better informed choices about alcohol.

What Could Have Helped Me

- **Access to Education:** Understanding that problematic drinking exists on a broad spectrum—not just at "rock bottom"—and that seeking support is valid at any stage, could have been transformative. Education on how alcohol disrupts sleep, affects mental health, and heightens risks for diseases like cancer might have encouraged me to reflect on my drinking habits earlier
- **Lived Experience Advocacy:** Hearing real stories of those impacted by alcohol would have reduced the shame I felt and encouraged me to seek help sooner.
- **Inclusive Practices:** Non-alcoholic alternatives and alcohol-free work events would have made me feel less pressured to participate in social drinking
- **Clear Support Systems:** Normalising access to employee assistance programs and promoting alcohol-specific resources could have made seeking help feel more approachable

Recommendations for Change

I urge the committee to recommend:

1. **Mandatory Workplace Education:** Every business should provide compulsory alcohol education covering mental health impacts, disrupted sleep, increased anxiety, and long-term risks such as cancer.
2. **Lived Experience Presentations:** Lived experience stories should be central to these programs to reduce stigma and inspire reflection.
3. **Inclusive Workplace Policies:** Encourage organisations to shift from alcohol-centric cultures by promoting alcohol-free networking events and meetings.
4. **Enhanced Employee Assistance Programs:** Expand EAP offerings to include alcohol-specific counselling and make these resources widely known within workplaces.

Addressing alcohol use in corporate Australia is a critical step towards improving public health and workplace productivity. I would be honoured to provide further insights or collaborate on developing effective workplace offerings through my SipSmart™ programs.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Elliott
The Alcohol Mindset Coach