# 2020\_POLICY\_SUBPAGES

## Background

There has been unprecedented growth in the physical availability of alcohol in Australia over the last 15 years.

The number of liquor licenses and licensed premises has increased dramatically. For example, in Victoria, the number of liquor licenses increased by 120 per cent between 1996 and 2010. Trading hours for alcohol sales, and in particular late night trading, have also increased dramatically in recent decades. This increase in the number and type of outlets, and their trading hours has resulted in alcohol becoming more readily available than it ever has been. In some states and territories, such as the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), alcohol can be sold in supermarkets, alongside groceries and other everyday items.

Across Australia, liquor licensing legislation limits the times when alcohol can be sold, where alcohol can be sold and the types of premises that can sell alcohol. The number, placement and trading hours of licensed outlets is largely the responsibility of liquor licensing authorities in each state and territory.

## The evidence

It is well-established that increases in the availability of alcohol contributes to increases in alcohol-related violence.

[Research in Melbourne](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2010.03333.x/abstract) has found that there is a strong association between family violence and the concentration of off-licence (packaged or take-away) liquor outlets in an area. The study concluded that a 10 per cent increase in off-licence liquor outlets is associated with a 3.3 per cent increase in family violence. Increases in family violence were also apparent with the increase in general (pub) licences and on-premise licences.

In Western Australia (WA), [a study](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21896075) concluded that for every 10,000 additional litres of pure alcohol sold at an off-licence liquor outlet, the risk of violence experienced in a residential setting increased by 26 per cent.

Longer and/or later [trading hours also contribute to alcohol harms](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2010.02945.x/full), such as drink driving, assaults and hospital presentations.

An evaluation of 3am close and 1am lockouts (later amended to 3.30am and 1.30am) introduced for all on-licence premises in Newcastle (NSW) in 2008 found that the [restrictions resulted in a 37 per cent reduction](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20840191) in night-time alcohol-related assaults with [no geographic displacement](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20840191) to the nearby late night district of Hamilton. These positive effects were sustained over time with an evaluation undertaken five years later finding sustained reductions in alcohol-related assaults, with an average of a [21 per cent decrease](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dar.12123/abstract) in assaults per hour.

The NSW Government introduced a similar set of measures in February 2014 to address concerns about alcohol-related violence. The measures included a 3am close and a 1.30am lockout for pubs, clubs and bars in the Sydney Central Business District (CBD) Entertainment precinct, and a 10pm close for take-away alcohol across NSW. According to a [recent report](https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/CJB/CJB183.pdf) released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, non-domestic assaults had fallen by 32 per cent in Kings Cross and 26 per cent in the Sydney CBD Entertainment precinct since the implementation of the measures.

## The solutions

Decreasing the availability of alcohol, both spatially and temporally, reduces alcohol harms. Governments can reduce the incidence of alcohol harms by:

* Preventing areas from becoming saturated with liquor outlets.
* Reducing the excessive availability of alcohol in areas already saturated with liquor outlets.
* Introducing trading hour restrictions to reduce the excessive availability of alcohol.

The tenure of all types of liquor licences should be time-limited and subject to reviews at least every five years. Revisions of liquor licences and licence applications should primarily consider the density of existing liquor licences in the area; the socio-economic status of the area, existing levels of alcohol-related harms in the area and community views.

### Policy submissions