# Adoption of the Alcohol Linking Program into routine practice by New South Wales police

## Researcher

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## Summary

Liquor licensing provisions exist in many jurisdictions to facilitate the safe consumption of alcohol on licensed premises. One strategy supporting the harm reduction objectives is enforcement of liquor licensing laws by regulatory agencies; however, in spite of evidence of its effectiveness, such enforcement has been limited; due, in part, to a lack of accurate information as to which premises need to be targeted.

The aim of the Alcohol Linking Program is to reduce the number of alcohol-related incidents through two types of intervention: data recording and premises.

In the Linking Program, NSW Police ask three questions whenever they attend a crime or other incident that falls into any of 32 categories commonly associated with alcohol consumption. The three questions are: did the person consume alcohol before the incident? what was the level of intoxication? and where did they have their last drink?

If alcohol is involved and it has been consumed on licensed premises, the answers go into a police database. Depending of the level of reporting, police deliver an educational intervention to the licensee based upon the recorded association of their premises with people involved in incidents.

## Outcomes

Initial research suggested that these two program interventions were feasible, efficacious and acceptable to stakeholders. Based on such findings, the New South Wales Government directed that the Linking Program be incorporated into the routine practice of all police across the state.

A statistically significant reduction in the number of people involved in alcohol-related incidents and assaults was observed, relative to their respective comparison areas in the number of people involved in either alcohol-related incidents or alcohol-related assaults.

The findings of the study are unequivocal: they demonstrate an immediate, marked and sustained increase in the availability of alcohol intelligence information to Police. There were significant reductions in alcohol-related incidents reinforcing previous findings of the Programs potential to reduce alcohol-related harm.

## References

Wiggers, J, Jauncey, M, Considine, R, Daly, J, Kingsland, M, Purss, K, Burrows, S, Nicholas, C & Waites, RJ 2004 Strategies and outcomes in translating alcohol harm reduction research into practice: the Alcohol Linking Program. Drug Alcohol Rev; 23: 355.
Wiggers, JH 2007 Reducing alcohol-related violence and improving community safety: the Alcohol Linking Program NSW Public Health Bulletin 18(56) 83-85.

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