# Alcohol companies are profiting off our pain

*Alcohol has long been linked to family violence and can increase the frequency and severity of family violence instances.*

*Kym Valentine is an experienced television and theatre actor and a member of the Victim Survivors’ Advisory Council (VSAC), which advises the Victorian Government on family violence policy and the implementation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations.*

*Despite the increasing harms alcohol is causing in Australia, alcohol companies have been lobbying the Government to cut alcohol taxes.*

*As an advocate with her own experience of family violence, Kym shares her reflections.*

How many times must our community pay for the harms caused by alcohol?

As a member of the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council in Victoria, I know the toll harmful products like alcohol can have on victims of family violence.

While family violence is complex with multiple factors and influences, the risk of violence increases when alcohol is involved1 – and that violence is more severe and more likely to result in physical injury2.

Women’s support services have reported alcohol is playing a growing role in family violence incidents. In 2020, NSW family violence support workers reported seeing more alcohol-related abuse than in 2019.3

In fact, alcohol causes more overall harm to the Australian community than any other drug.4

Over the past few years, alcohol retail sales have grown substantially – with alcohol companies raking in an additional $3.6 billion in sales since 20195. While alcohol companies are recording record-breaking sales, our community faces devastating increases in alcohol harms.

Yet, these alcohol companies are now asking for a $150 million a year tax cut. It makes no sense.

Our friends, family and community deserve to live in a safe, happy, healthy environment. But, despite knowing that alcohol causes significant harm to Australian communities, the Government is contemplating giving alcohol companies this tax cut and making alcohol products more accessible.

We know alcohol taxation and price measures are among the most effective and cost-effective ways we can reduce alcohol harms.

Over the past two decades, alcohol taxation has helped to steadily reduce alcohol use in Australia, but now when we’re seeing rises in alcohol harms, we’re looking at reducing alcohol tax?

This thought brings shudders as I think about how the impact of this will result in increased fear, harm, death and family violence to our families and community.

As a community, we’re already paying too much for the harm caused by alcohol.

We pay to help support the services who are left to deal with the aftermath of increasing alcohol harms.

We pay through our hospitals, ambulances and emergency services who provide treatment and care to our loved ones.

We pay for it with increased family violence, road accidents, cancer and death.

We pay for the strain on our police and ambulance services.

We pay through our hospitals when people need treatment and care.

We pay to help support the services who are left to deal with the aftermath of increasing alcohol harms.

We will pay again, and again and again.

Why are we talking about giving multi-million-dollar alcohol companies a $150 million per year tax cut? How does this make sense?

Instead, the Government should boost its funding for various life-saving services, including family violence support services, which are left to deal with the aftermath of increasing alcohol harms.

We must ask ourselves – are elevated levels of alcohol harm an acceptable trade-off for giving alcohol companies a tax break?

This is not a price I’m willing to pay, and it’s not a price our community should pay.

[1] <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-11-109>

[2] <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0886260510370596>

[3] <https://fare.org.au/role-of-alcohol-in-family-violence-revealed-by-specialists-in-covid-19-assessment/>

[4] <https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsgp/clinical/alcohol-tops-study-ranking-drug-harms-in-australia>

[5] <https://fare.org.au/growing-concern-for-our-community-as-alcohol-sales-increase-again/>