# "The availability of fast delivery alcohol, and targeted ads, contributed to my friend’s death"

**Content warning:** This story contains references to death, liver disease and alcohol use

Alex Bagnara knew that Greg\* had been struggling with alcohol for years.

But when she boarded a plane at Canberra Airport with her longtime friend and his parents, siblings and their children, Alex could never have imagined that she would end up flying home next to an empty seat.

Greg had seemed sure he could handle the trip and was looking forward to holidaying at a resort in a warmer climate in the winter of 2023.

It became clear, upon arriving at their destination, that Greg was very unwell.

“We went to the emergency department. Unfortunately, he didn't leave the hospital,” Alex recalls.

“A couple of days after he was admitted, we were told that he had kidney failure that was secondary to alcohol-related liver disease, and he was going to be looked after in palliative care.

“I returned from what was to be a pretty special family holiday with an empty seat next to me. It was devastating.”

Alex remembers Greg, who worked in IT, as “a quiet intellect” who was quick-witted and could be cheeky.

“We played social poker with mates every few months and he would often bluff and take down the table,” she recalls.

“He was an avid reader with a thirst for knowledge and a wide set of interests, from politics to military history ... He enjoyed basketball, seeing bands, dirt-bike riding and camping. He was also extremely proficient in the kitchen - he always made delicious food.”

Greg liked to show his affection for family and friends through “some very random 'thinking of you' gifts”.

Alex said her friend had suffered isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and had started to buy alcohol through a company that delivers alcoholic products in as little as 20 minutes.

“I think the availability of fast delivery alcohol, and the targeted ads he was shown on social media, contributed to my friend’s death,” she said.

“He had a broken ankle, so his ability to get to a bottle shop was limited, but when I went over to check on him, I saw empty bottles and bags with the branding of fast delivery alcohol companies.

“I'm quite sure that if he had left the house to try and procure the alcohol himself he would have likely been denied service.”

Alex decided to share her story as part of FARE’s Voices of Change project in the hopes that it would lead to change.

She wants to see reforms to how alcohol is sold and marketed online, so that people like Greg can’t be bombarded with highly targeted ads for alcohol, prompting them to buy with the click of a button.

“Alcohol companies would send him push notifications with special deals and reminders, when he was in a really vulnerable state,” Alex said.

“They would deliver him alcohol with little or no vetting. I am sure that there were times when he was sold alcohol online, while already intoxicated – and that if he had gone into a licensed premises, he may have been denied service.”

\*Name changed to protect the privacy of Greg’s family

*If you have experiences to share that can help people know they’re not alone, please share your story through our*[***Voices of Change project.***](https://fare.org.au/voicesofchange/)

*Photo credit: ABC News*