# Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry

In 2023, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced an independent inquiry into Australia’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is chaired by Robyn Kruk AO. This inquiry has broad terms of reference including exploring key health response measures and health supports.

FARE made a submission to the inquiry, noting that COVID-19 has had lasting impacts on the ways that alcohol is sold and marketed and the resulting harms. Action is needed to ensure that common sense measures are introduced to help reduce and prevent alcohol harm.

Our submission highlighted three trends of increasing risk of alcohol harms during COVID-19:

* **Increased alcohol harms** - There are increasing rates of alcohol harms across the country, with alcohol induced deaths and treatment episodes at their highest rates in a decade.
* **Predatory marketing** - The way that alcohol is marketed and sold online is becoming more predatory, making every phone a bottleshop and billboard, putting people at greater risk of harm.
* **Online sales and delivery** - Regulation has not kept pace with the changing ways alcohol is sold, with some governments making the sale of alcohol easier, increasing the risk of harm.

## FARE recommends:

1. Laws relating to the collection of people’s data online, the sale and marketing of alcohol and licensing need to be modernised to take into consideration the changed way that alcohol is marketed and sold online. This includes increasing protections in the Privacy Act, State and Territory Liquor Acts and introducing independent regulation of alcohol marketing.
2. A nation-wide awareness-raising campaign on alcohol is needed to increase the community’s understanding of the risks associated with alcohol use.

The increasing rates of alcohol harm are concerning and warrant an urgent whole-of-government response that involves coordination between State and Territory health and regulatory bodies to ensure that alcohol harms are reduced and prevented.

[read the submission](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FARE-Submission-Letter-to-Commonwealth-COVID-19-Response-Inquiry.pdf)