# It’s not OK to sell alcohol to kids online

This week the NSW Upper House is debating the *Liquor Amendment (24-hour economy) Bill 2020*, which includes closing loopholes relating to online alcohol delivery to children and people who are intoxicated.

Currently, common sense measures like verifying ID when selling alcohol online are not required across Australia, including in NSW.

FARE’s Annual Alcohol Poll 2020 found online alcohol retailers were not routinely checking ID, with only 38 per cent of people having their ID checked on delivery and 25 per cent finding alcohol left unattended.

These are incredibly important reforms because, right now, alcohol companies are pushing alcohol into the home, hard and fast, in this unregulated, exploding market.

Online alcohol retail giant Woolworths has reported an increase in its ‘on demand’ deliveries (those that occur within two hours) of 161 per cent.

This type of delivery is associated with riskier drinking, with 70 per cent of Australians who get online alcohol delivered within two hours drinking at risky levels and 38 per cent having 11 or more standard drinks on that day.

Given these changes in how alcohol retailers are pushing their products out into the community and into our homes, it is important the standards that we set for how they operate keep pace. Our community expects alcohol companies to operate responsibly, and that means ensuring that alcohol is not sold to children or to people who are intoxicated, and that companies selling alcohol do all they can to minimise the harms from their products.

Higher alcohol use in the home is a serious concern with indications of increases in alcohol-fuelled harms since COVID-19 impacted Australians. Case workers across NSW are reporting seeing increased alcohol involvement in family violence and there is also an increase in demand for online alcohol support services.

Women’s Safety NSW has reached out to people working on the frontline of family violence services and 73 per cent of them have reported an increase in family violence triggered by drug and alcohol use. Before the pandemic, one in five children were negatively impacted in some way by the alcohol use of those around them. These impacts have long lasting implications.

Data from the Australian Government’s National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline shows that calls doubled in the months of March and April and Hello Sunday Morning’s Daybreak App has also seen an increase in usage since April.

The habits that are formed during COVID-19 will be hard to undo once the pandemic restrictions ease. This includes daily drinking, drinking earlier in the day, drinking alone and drinking to cope with stress and anxiety. The impact on rates of alcohol use disorder will not be known for many months or even years.

Eighty-seven per cent of NSW residents agree a person’s age should be verified to buy alcohol online.

Until now, there’s been strong resistance from alcohol industry lobby groups, representing the largest alcohol retailers, which are exerting pressure to have many straight-forward amendments, such as age verification, watered down.

A range of common-sense measures are being proposed by several organisations: Women’s Safety NSW; FARE; the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine; the Salvation Army; the George Institute; Australian Health Promotion Association; Cancer Council NSW; Families Australia; Youth Action; the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies; the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol; the Australian Medical Association (NSW); the Alcohol and Drug Foundation; the Public Health Association of Australia and Alcohol Change Vic.

These measures will help ensure the community’s health and safety and include:

* Verifying the age of the person buying alcohol both at the point of sale online and delivery to the door
* Ensuring that people who are intoxicated are not sold alcohol
* Introducing a two-hour delay between order and delivery
* Limiting delivery to between 12pm and 9pm.

Now, more than ever, we all want to be doing what we can to keep our families and communities healthy and safe. These measures will help to ensure that online alcohol companies uphold community standards and expectations.