# "This wasn't the first time her husband had been drinking and it wouldn't have been the last"

***Content warning:*** *This article discusses family violence and alcohol use.*

Joan\* knows first-hand how alcohol intensifies family violence, and how this is made worse by the explosion of online sales and rapid delivery of alcohol at all hours of the day and night.

Joan’s daughter was violently attacked by her partner, after he had been drinking heavily, which left her daughter dealing with the severe long-term physical and emotional effects.

“He was a very heavy drinker. He would begin to drink when he got home on a Friday night and just continue to drink for the whole weekend. It was on a Friday night that he attacked her,” Joan said.

“He threw her up against a wall and was strangling her and the teenage children intervened and were able to pull him off. He then grabbed a knife and was going to kill them.

“They barricaded themselves in a bedroom and called the police.”

Weeks later, Joan’s daughter suffered a stroke, likely linked to non-fatal strangulation.

Joan’s daughter had just completed nursing training, a career she’d dreamed of her entire life.

“She’d been working and holding the family together and providing a stable income for the home,” Joan said.

“For my daughter, it didn’t just become an issue of trying to get her life back together, but she lost her dream, and she will never really be able to do that now. She’s just not physically or emotionally capable of pursuing that career.”

Joan regards alcohol as a high-risk factor in both family violence and sexual violence and believes alcohol can exacerbate family violence due to its disinhibitory effects.

“I think it could be a trigger like many other things, like losing your job or financial difficulties or the death of a child.

“Any of these things can be triggers, but the causes of family violence are much more complex and much deeper than those external influences on people’s lives.

“For my daughter, this wasn’t the first time her husband had been drinking and it wouldn’t have been the last.”

Alcohol never excuses a family violence perpetrator, but it is a significant risk factor that exacerbates violence.

Alcohol is involved in between 23% and 65% of all police-reported family violence incidents. When perpetrators are drinking, it also increases the severity of violence, leading to higher rates of harm and injury.

The increasing accessibility and availability of alcohol, largely through the unregulated online sale and rapid delivery of alcohol into people’s homes, has added fuel to the fire.

Joan said this was particularly concerning because of the potential to fuel violence in the home.

“I could quote stories about what it’s like for women late at night when the perpetrator comes home, after having perhaps been out for a night of drinking, and then can still continue to drink because the availability is there,” she said.

“It’s a 24/7 situation with online deliveries.”

Alcohol companies used the pandemic as an opportunity to expand online sales and alcohol delivery to people’s homes, and liquor licensing laws were loosened to allow a broader range of licensed premises, including restaurants, cafés and clubs, to deliver alcohol.

Joan believes restricting the availability of alcohol, including the hours of alcohol trading and delivery, should be a first step in addressing the involvement of alcohol in family violence.

“I think limiting the hours of availability or even some of the conditions of availability has got to be one of the first steps that we could make. And I think we could do that quite easily.”

*\*Name has been changed for privacy.*

*If you or someone you know is struggling, there is* [*support available*](https://fare.org.au/resources/support/)*.*

[*1800RESPECT*](https://www.1800respect.org.au/) *(1800 737 732) provides 24/7 domestic and family violence support and counselling services.*