# More Australians are seeking support for alcohol. Here's how governments can take action

Anyone struggling with alcohol should be able to seek help without being inundated with aggressive and targeted online ads plastered across their social media accounts, or as they browse a website.

But right now, every phone is a bottle shop and a billboard, making it almost impossible for people trying to cut back to avoid rampant alcohol advertising.

New data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows more and more people are seeking treatment and support for alcohol each year.

In 2022-23, the proportion of people s[eeking help for alcohol as their principal drug of concern reached the highest in a decade](https://fare.org.au/more-australians-are-seeking-treatment-for-alcohol/).

The report, [Alcohol and other Drug Treatment Services in Australia: Early Insights](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services-aus/contents/about),also shows the number of people who accessed treatment for alcohol as a common principal drug of concern has increased from 48,500 closed treatment episodes in 2003-04 to 92,417 closed treatment episodes in 2022-23.

AIHW define 'principal drug of concern' as the main substance a client stated led them to seek treatment from an alcohol and drug agency.

The data also found alcohol is the most common principal drug of concern, with 42.5% of people receiving treatment for it compared to any other drug including amphetamines (24%), cannabis (17%) and heroin (4.5%).

[Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia](https://aadc.org.au/what-we-do/) CEO Melanie Walker said the number of older people seeking treatment was increasing over time.

“Given alcohol was the most common principal drug of concern for clients over 40, I think that is reflected in FARE’s key point that the proportion of people seeking help for alcohol as their principal drug of concern is also the highest in a decade,” she said.

“It will be particularly important to reflect on this growing cohort of older people engaging with treatment and what that means for policy and programs going forward.” 

**We know for every person seeking support for alcohol, there are many more people who aren’t getting the help they need.**

The landscape right now is extremely concerning.

Alcohol companies are collecting more data on people than ever before, which means those who are struggling are increasingly targeted with relentless marketing.

There are several steps our federal and state governments can act now to prevent harms.

The federal government is currently reviewing the Privacy Act, which is a prime opportunity to ensure people’s data isn’t collected and used to market harmful and addictive products to those already doing it tough around alcohol.

State and territory governments can also play a role by reviewing and updating their legislation to ensure proper protections are in place for the delivery of alcohol, including having ID checks, not selling alcohol late at night into the home, and introducing a two-hour safety pause between when an order is placed and when it is delivered.

[Polling across the ACT, South Australia and Queensland](https://fare.org.au/policy/research/) found strong support for these common-sense measures to reduce harm.

Each of these jurisdictions are currently considering reforms in the online sale and delivery of alcohol.

These changes can go a long way to ensuring our community can spend time online while keeping healthy and well.