# Submission to the Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia

The Australian government is currently conducting an [*Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia*](https://fare.org.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs-inquiry/).

All Australians should have the opportunity to be healthy, safe and free from the many ways that alcohol causes harm to people, families and communities. Alcohol contributes to harm, injustice and inequity for far too many people in Australia. This includes family and domestic violence, disability, chronic diseases like cancer, homelessness, self-harm and suicide.

These harmful impacts intersect and interact in complex ways requiring effective, evidence-informed policy measures and practices to address and reduce the harms. Alcohol is no ordinary commodity, it is a harmful product, requiring regulatory controls to minimise harm.

FARE made 31 recommendations in its submission to the inquiry across several topics.

### Summary of recommendations

#### Human rights, justice and self-determination

1. Establish a national network of AOD lived experience advisory groups.
2. Ensure alcohol policy reflects Australia’s commitments under international human rights instruments.
3. Reduce stigmatisation by ensuring that adequate funding is provided for anti-stigma training and resources for all related workforces.
4. Develop guidelines for all government communications that promotesnon-stigmatising language and centres people.
5. Increase investment in accessible, trauma-informed mental health and AOD supports and treatment in criminal justice systems.
6. Raise the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility to at least 14 years.
7. Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations are genuinely engaged in decision-making about alcohol programs, policies and laws.

#### Gendered violence

1. Fully implement the recommendations relating to alcohol in ‘*Unlocking the Prevention Potential: accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence’.*
2. Ensure that each jurisdiction meets its National Cabinet commitment to review alcohol laws.

#### Systemic reforms

1. Establish a national, AOD sector inclusive governance structure.
2. Commission the development of a framework for model alcohol legislation for Australia that prioritises alcohol harm reduction.
3. Develop and implement a regulatory framework with a legislative basis.
4. Continue to index the excise on beer and spirits.
5. Replace the Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) with a volumetric tax rate.
6. Introduce a Minimum Unit Price (MUP) for alcohol.

#### Prevention

1. Fund the development and implementation of a national public education campaign on the NHMRC *Australian alcohol guidelines.*
2. Extend funding for the ‘*National Campaign on Alcohol, Pregnancy and Breastfeeding’*.

#### Screening and supports

1. Prioritise resourcing equitable access to social services, including family support, and primary healthcare.
2. Increase the capacity for cross-sector screening for AOD, by funding AOD, mental health, primary healthcare and family and domestic violence services.

#### Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

1. Provide secure, ongoing and indexed funding for National Organisation for NOFASD Australia, the FASDHub and the FASD Australian Register.
2. Implement fully the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry into Effective approaches to prevention, diagnosis and support for FASD, that reported in 2021.
3. Implement a National Partnership Agreement to adequately fund FASD assessment and diagnosis across Australia.
4. Implement FASD professional development for all health, education, child protection and community services professionals.
5. Implement effective referral pathways to appropriate and adequately funded community services for people with FASD.
6. Restore eligibility of people in criminal justice systems, (including people with FASD), to universal services, i.e. NDIS, DSP, PBS and Medicare.
7. Implement mandatory FASD professional development for all justice professionals.
8. Implement adequately funded, neuro-developmental (including FASD) assessment, diagnosis, and support.
9. Design and implement disability specialist courts, modelled on the FASD Court in Manitoba, Canada.

#### Harmful industries

1. Include addressing the commercial determinants of alcohol harms in all strategic documents (eg. National Alcohol Strategy).
2. Prohibit political donations from alcohol companies and their lobby groups.
3. Exclude alcohol companies and their lobby groups from the development of laws policies or programs related to alcohol harm reduction.

Read the full submission below.

[read the submission](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FARE-Submission-to-Inquiry-into-the-health-impacts-of-AOD-1.pdf)