

New study finds online alcohol delivery platforms expose Australians to increased harm; strong community support for safety measures

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New research has found online alcohol sales and advertising are exposing Australians to increased harm – especially people most at risk – while current laws fail to keep pace with the digital environment.

The report, *Online sale, delivery and advertising of alcohol in Australia – behaviour, attitudes and support for change*, was led by researchers from the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), The University of Queensland and The George Institute.

FARE CEO Ayla Chorley said, “The explosion of online sale and rapid delivery has made alcohol more available and accessible. When alcohol can be delivered in as little as 20 minutes - day and night - without checks and balances, it puts individuals, and women and children experiencing violence in the home, at greater risk.”

The survey of 2,037 Australians on their alcohol use and delivery habits found:

- **One in three participants (39%) who used alcohol in the past year had alcohol delivered to their home** - and nearly **40% of those received it within two hours**, increasing the risk of high-risk drinking and harm.
- People likely **experiencing alcohol dependency are twice as likely to have alcohol sold to them for rapid delivery to their home** compared to those at low risk (55% vs 24%) - putting them at greater risk of harm.
- **Most participants support stronger protections**, including stopping push notifications (4 in 5 or 78%), preventing personal data use to target online marketing (3 in 4 or 77%), and introducing health warnings on retail websites (4 in 5 or 80%).

“Alcohol is now sold and marketed in a frictionless digital environment, and regulation has failed to keep up. Common sense reforms like delivery time limits, a two-hour safety pause from order to delivery, age checks, and marketing restrictions, are needed,” Ms Chorley said.

Alex Bagnara, whose friend died at the age of 46 from alcohol-related organ failure, said safeguards are needed to protect people most at risk.

“Alcohol companies would often send my friend push notifications with special deals and reminders when he was in a really vulnerable state,” Ms Bagnara said.

“They would deliver him alcohol with little or no vetting. I am sure that there were times when he was sold alcohol online, while already intoxicated. More needs to be done to hold alcohol companies to a higher standard when it comes to marketing and selling alcohol online.”

Report co-author, Professor Nicholas Carah from the University of Queensland said, “The research shows that people at higher risk of harm, including people likely experiencing alcohol dependency, were more likely to use delivery platforms.

“This is particularly concerning when alcohol ads now link directly to sales platforms and delivery can happen in 20 minutes, removing the buffer between advertising and purchase, and increasing impulse purchases and harm.”

Report co-author, Professor Simone Pettigrew from The George Institute said, “Our findings show the community is incredibly supportive of implementing measures to safeguard from harms of alcohol sold online and delivered rapidly into the home.

“Four in five Australians support banning push notifications prompting an alcohol purchase, while three quarters agree with companies not being allowed to use online activity to market their products.”

The research builds on extensive evidence that supports common-sense updates to state alcohol laws around alcohol sold online and delivered into the home.

In August, South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas [committed to addressing the role of alcohol delivery in his response](#) to South Australia’s recent Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence.

Right now, [the South Australian government is considering draft legislation](#) to implement a 2-hour safety pause between order and delivery, amending delivery times to 10am – 10pm and ensuring harm minimisation is a paramount object of liquor laws.

Ms Chorley added, “We know from both victim survivors and from the research that alcohol intensifies violence towards women and children. We’re calling on the Malinauskas government to take this nation-leading step and implement changes to put the community’s wellbeing before industry profit.”

Available for interview:

- FARE CEO Ayla Chorley
- Professor Nicholas Carah
- Professor Simone Pettigrew

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