

W.SPAUL SUBMISSION 4 ON THE DRAFT FREE TV CODE 2 NOVEMBER 2024

I object to the permissions for alcohol advertising because they are discriminatory towards women and girls, as outlined below. For too long, the Commonwealth has failed to reduce violence against women by failing to reduce advertisements for alcohol, which causes domestic violence:

For years, I have been asking policy-makers to recognise the role that alcohol plays in family violence. To hear Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner Micaela Cronin [say publicly](#) last week that alcohol is “undeniably a factor” in these crimes, and that it can lead to more serious violence, was a huge relief for those of us who have lived through that reality. As Cronin recognised, there has previously been a reluctance to acknowledge the role of alcohol in case it “excused” or “justified” the offender’s behaviour. But our political leaders can no longer ignore the fact alcohol is involved in between [23 and 65 per cent](#) of all police-reported family violence incidents across Australia. It was a massive relief to hear someone in a position of power, like the commissioner, acknowledge the link between alcohol and family violence. For victim-survivors like me, the link has always been clear and unequivocal. The kids who have hidden in closets and bathrooms – hearing furniture being thrown and adults screaming – know that when drinking is involved, it’s like pouring petrol on a bonfire. But these children can’t leave. That’s why we must be their voice.¹

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE DISADVANTAGE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS CAUSED BY ALCOHOL ADVERTISING

The more that alcohol is promoted, the more it is used.² The Commonwealth acknowledges that there is “a strong association between exposure to alcohol advertising and young peoples’ drinking”³ and the Australian Medical Association says that there is “compelling evidence” of this.⁴

The World Health Organisation says that alcohol promotion is enormously well-funded and pervasive, is designed to recruit young people into the ranks of heavier alcohol users to replace older users, and works against health promotion messages.⁵ A European study found consistent evidence to demonstrate that alcohol advertising causes young people to start using alcohol or to use it more if they already use it,⁶ as did a study by the University of Sheffield School of Health and Related Research.⁷

Contrary to the lies by the alcohol industry, advertising is about increasing consumption and getting non-users of alcohol to start using it, not just promoting brand loyalty. During debate on the *Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Act 1992* the notion that tobacco advertising only encourages people to change brands, not to smoke, was dismissed as nonsense and an advertising executive was quoted as saying that such a notion is “preposterous” and “flies in the face of all advertising knowledge and experience”. Further, “alcohol marketing competition has a cumulative effect with hundreds of alcohol brands being marketed simultaneously through multiple media channels, all with the purpose of gaining market share”.⁸

¹ Kym Valentine, “Too often, alcohol and family violence go together. Now, we need to separate them” Sydney Morning Herald 12 May 2024.

² World Health Organisation *Digital Marketing of Alcoholic Beverages: what has changed?* 2021, 4.

³ National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028, 20.

⁴ Alcohol Marketing and Young People: Time for a new policy agenda, page 51.

⁵ World Health Organisation *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity*, 2010 edition, page 196 and 326.

⁶ European Alcohol and Health Forum Science Group “Does Marketing Communication Impact on the Volume and Patterns of Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages, Especially by Young People? A Review of Longitudinal Studies” (2009) at 17.

⁷ Rachel Jackson et al *Interventions on Control of Alcohol Price, Promotion and Availability for Prevention of Alcohol Use Disorders in Adults and Young People* (University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, 2009), 194.

⁸ ANPHA Report, 39.

Alcohol use causes violence against women, and the more it is used, the greater the violence. (Unlike tobacco.) There is no doubt that alcohol use causes violence against women.⁹ The World Health Organisation says that harmful use of alcohol is a major contributor to violence, that studies across the world show that alcohol use commonly precedes aggressive behaviour, and that harmful drinking is associated with being both a perpetrator and a victim of violence.¹⁰

The Commonwealth has been aware for decades of the correlation between alcohol use and violence against women.¹¹ For example, in 2001 the Commonwealth admitted that “it is widely accepted that alcohol is a factor in domestic violence”¹² and “Alcohol misuse has been shown to be a major contributor to injury through interpersonal violence particularly assaults, domestic violence and child abuse”.¹³

The Commonwealth admits that in 2015–16, an estimated 162,400 Australians experienced physical assault where the offender was under the influence of alcohol, and that research has also shown that alcohol is involved in 34% of intimate partner violence incidents.¹⁴ The Commonwealth similarly admits that “alcohol misuse increases the severity and frequency of family violence”.¹⁵ The Commonwealth also admits that alcohol use contributes to the disproportionately high rates of violence experienced by Indigenous women.¹⁶

The Commonwealth further admits that “Greater attention should be paid to the relationship between access to alcohol and family violence in light of the evidence showing that alcohol misuse increases the frequency and severity of family violence”.¹⁷

Alcohol causes violence against women in many ways (unlike tobacco), which the Commonwealth admits.

Alcohol use causes changes in brain regions involved in self-control, decision-making, and emotional processing, leading to increased violence when alcohol is present in the user’s system.¹⁸ The Department of Health says that alcohol fosters environments where violence occurs, it may be used to cope with a violent incident, or it may directly exacerbate the violent nature of an incident. Alcohol misuse is an important factor in homicide. In general, the risk of adverse social consequences is directly proportional to the quantity of alcohol consumed.¹⁹

Males are more likely to use alcohol than females.²⁰ Those who use alcohol the most are more likely to be males than females.²¹ Alcohol use makes male perpetrators more sensitive to perceived slights or challenges to their masculinity. Alcohol use may be used as a justification or excuse for violence. Alcohol use during large-scale sporting events increases men’s violence towards their female partners,²² including increased violence during state of origin rugby league matches.²³

⁹ Drug and Alcohol Review “Thirty years of research show alcohol to be a cause of intimate partner violence: Future research needs to identify who to treat and how to treat them”, January 2017, page 7.

¹⁰ *Violence Prevention the Evidence: Preventing violence by reducing the availability and harmful use of alcohol* at page 3.

¹¹ Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care “Alcohol in Australia: Issues and Strategies” 2001, 5.

¹² *Ibid*, 14.

¹³ *Ibid*, 13.

¹⁴ National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028, 16.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Fourth Action Plan: National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010-2022, 22.

¹⁷ National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028, 16.

¹⁸ *Frontiers in Psychology*, “Alcohol, Aggression and Violence: From Public Health to Neuroscience”, 2021, 12:699726.

¹⁹ Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care “Alcohol in Australia: Issues and Strategies” 2001, 13.

²⁰ Alcohol and Drug Foundation factsheet “Treatment – the gender divide explained” 4 September 2020.

²¹ La Trobe University, *Distribution of Alcohol Use in Australia*, 2022, 2.

²² [Why some women have real reason to fear the World Cup \(phys.org/news/2010-06-women-real-world-cup.html\)](https://phys.org/news/2010-06-women-real-world-cup.html).

²³ FARE media release 22 June 2018: Domestic violence surge: state of origin game leaves women and children battered and bruised.

An inquiry by the Victorian Parliament referred to evidence confirming that women whose partners got drunk a couple of times a month or more experience higher levels of violence than women of partners who got drunk less, that the level of alcohol consumption is associated with the probability and severity of violence, and that alcohol abuse is common among offenders and is a predictor of domestic violence over time.²⁴

Alcohol causes violence against pregnant women. (Unlike tobacco.) Women can be at higher risk of violence when pregnant.²⁵ Hundreds of thousands of Australian women have experienced domestic violence while pregnant.²⁶

Alcohol increased domestic violence during covid-19. A total of 53 frontline women's specialist domestic and family violence workers from 27 family and domestic violence services in NSW were surveyed in May 2020. Around 51 per cent reported that there has been an increase in the involvement of alcohol in domestic violence situations since the COVID-19 restrictions were introduced. None of the respondents reported decreased involvement. Issues with alcohol use and domestic violence included: increased alcohol use because of changed circumstances, alcohol use increasing verbal and physical abuse, and alcohol adding to financial strain on the family.²⁷

The Commonwealth's "action plans" to reduce domestic violence wrongly downplay the role of alcohol. While the Commonwealth has on various occasions admitted that alcohol causes domestic violence, this has not translated into sensible planning to reduce domestic violence, either by banning the promotion of alcohol or taking other steps to address its adverse impacts.

The Third Action Plan 2016-2019 to reduce violence against women and their children does not even mention alcohol - except to downplay its relevance on the last of its 44 pages. Alcohol is senselessly said to be a "contributing factor" to violence, but not a "causal factor". To try to justify that assertion, page 44 of the Third Action Plan contains the spurious comment, dropped from the Fourth Action Plan, that "Most people who consume alcohol ... do not commit acts of domestic or family violence". However, most people who smoke do not get lung cancer, but smoking causes lung cancer. It is therefore senseless to refer to the proportion of people who use alcohol without committing violence

The Commonwealth's failure to properly take account of the impact of alcohol in its domestic violence plan has been harshly criticised. Former Senator Nova Peris OAM said:

A domestic violence strategy that does not even mention alcohol is not worth the paper it is written on.

Similarly, former Australian of the Year Rosie Batty later said that alcohol is not adequately addressed in family violence plans. The Fourth Action Plan 2019-2022 to reduce violence against women and their children is no better, apart from a very brief mention of alcohol in relation to violence against Indigenous women.

The Commonwealth admits that gender stereotyping, disrespecting women, and condoning misconduct against women are among the main causes of violence against women.²⁸ This is exactly what alcohol promotion does. Alcohol promotion increases gender stereotyping; maintains gender hierarchy; commodifies and objectifies women; degrades and denigrates women; and perpetuates rape culture

²⁴ Parliament of Victoria *Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption Final Report 2006* Volume 1, page 159.

²⁵ Fourth Action Plan: National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010-2022, page 27.

²⁶ Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence Volume 1, 20.

²⁷ *Family violence and alcohol during covid-19*.

²⁸ Fourth Action Plan: National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010-2022, page 8.

through victim blaming.²⁹ The sexualisation of women in alcohol marketing creates a climate that tolerates sexist behaviour, for example unwanted sexual attention.³⁰ Australian men have some of the most sexist views in the Western world.³¹ That situation is exacerbated by alcohol promotion, which has sexualised women to promote alcohol to men for decades. Alcohol promotion therefore has adverse impacts beyond increasing alcohol use. The advertising industry is still dominated by men, who will continue to generate sexist promotions of alcohol if not completely banned from doing so.

It is well known that alcohol promotion drives violence against women, irrespective of alcohol use, because it increases stereotyping, disrespect of and condoning of misconduct against women. There is abundant research supporting this proposition. For example, research which examined the contrasting portrayals of men and women in alcohol ads concluded that:

Men were typically shown as physically strong, professionally successful, and engaging in physically demanding or risky activities such as sports or construction work, while women tended to be depicted as deferent through attire, facial expression, and body positioning and posture. Such discrepancies serve to perpetuate notions of gender hierarchy

... women were presented as commodities to be consumed alongside the alcohol beverages being promoted ... these advertisements can be seen to uphold and perpetuate gender stereotypes as well as presenting women either as submissive ... or as sexual objects ...

Contrary to women's, men's portrayals involved a sense of being in control, successful, confident, assertive, muscular, and hard-working.

Such differential representations show how alcohol consumption is typically linked with gender stereotypes ... This is an important finding, given the established causal relationship between the upholding of gender norms and the perpetration of sexual violence against women ...

This disparity serves to reinforce the association between alcohol, hegemonic masculinity and sexual gratification ... gender biases correlated with alcohol use can perpetuate rape culture through victim-blaming ...

The advertisements presented in this thesis show exaggerated, hyper-ritualised representations of gender ... Through the gendered representation of women as passive and submissive sexual objects and men as active and domineering, these gendered scripts can become internalised and potentially acted out.

*Analyses of advertisements selected for this study have evidenced a championing of hegemonic masculinity at the expense of women's autonomy ... [this] strips women of their agency, signalling to men that women lack autonomy, making them targets for objectification and degradation in social contexts ...*³²

Similarly:

²⁹ Laurence Cobbaert Master of Philosophy Thesis *Australian Alcohol Advertising, Gender Stereotypes, and Alcohol-Involved Sexual Assault*, 2019, pages 140-143.

³⁰ International Journal of Drug Policy A.M. Atkinson et al "'Pretty in Pink' and 'Girl Power': An analysis of the targeting and representation of women in alcohol brand marketing on Facebook and Instagram" Vol 101, March 2022,

³¹ Sydney Morning Herald 12 March 2022 L. Bourke et al "Australia's above average sexism highlighted in global report".

³² Laurence Cobbaert Master of Philosophy Thesis *Australian Alcohol Advertising, Gender Stereotypes, and Alcohol-Involved Sexual Assault*, 2019, pages 140-143.

Alcohol advertisements are particularly likely to depict women in sexualised or subordinate roles ... Girls learn that they are expected to be attractive, cooperative and caring, while boys learn that they are expected to be strong, active and independent. Both boys and girls learn that activities and behaviours associated with masculinity have a higher social status.

The sexualisation and objectification of women in advertising and other mass media has a negative impact on women's health and wellbeing. The ubiquity of sexualising and objectifying portrayals of women in advertising and other media causes girls and women to understand that they will be viewed and evaluated based on their appearance.

Girls and women who are regularly exposed to sexually objectifying media content are more likely to objectify themselves and internalise unrealistic appearance-related ideals. In turn, this increases body dissatisfaction, contributes to disordered eating, lower self-esteem and reduced mental health and results in reduced satisfaction in sexual relationships and reduced participation in physical activity and exercise ...

Sexualised and objectifying representations influence how women are perceived and treated. Sexualised representations in advertising and other media can cause women and men to have a diminished view of women's humanity, competence and morality. Women are perceived as less capable, less intelligent and more animal-like when they are portrayed in sexualised ways.

Objectifying and sexualised media content is associated with attitudes that support violence against women. Specifically, exposure to advertisements and media content that objectifies or sexualises women is associated with a greater support for sexist beliefs, attitudes that blame victims for sexual violence, a greater tolerance of sexual aggression, and men's use of sexually coercive behaviour.³³

Alcohol promotion perpetuates stereotypical concepts of gender:

There is strong evidence of the alcohol industry's use of gender identities, particularly representations of masculinity, in the marketing of beer and spirits ... Representations of masculinity and gender relations in advertising reflect and employ identities evident in communities but they also work to produce them through the practices and meanings associated with alcohol consumption, particularly beer ... An obvious explanation for the appeal of certain forms of masculinity and gender relations in advertising representations is that men, particularly young men, consume alcohol in much greater quantity than women and are thus the target for profit generation ... Beer commercials have been described as promoting the myth that there is one stereotypical form of masculinity ... The promotion of a single masculinity serves to marginalize others and is potentially problematic for the prevention of domestic violence.³⁴

The alcohol industry exploits and maintains harmful views about women:

After all, wives and girlfriends to whom men are committed, whom they respect and love, often do place limits on men's time spent out with the boys, as well as limits on men's consumption of alcohol. The industry seems to know this: as long as men remain distrustful of women, seeing them either as bitches who are trying to ensnare them and take away their freedom or as whores with whom they

³³ Women's Health Victoria "Advertising Inequality: The Impacts of Sexist Advertising on Women's Health and Well-Being" December 2018, pages 5-6. See also Sandra Jones et al "The use of female sexuality in Australian alcohol advertising: public policy implications of young adults' reactions to stereotypes" *Journal of Public Affairs* February 2009, 19.

³⁴ A.J. Towns et al "Constructions of masculinity in alcohol advertising: Implications for the prevention of domestic violence" *Addiction Research and Theory*, October 2012, 389 at 392.

can party and have sex with no emotional commitment attached, then men remain more open to the marketing strategies of the industry.³⁵

Alcohol promotion denigrates and downgrades women and incites violence against them:

... representations in alcohol advertisements designed to reach young men articulate a 'manual of masculinity', or what it is to be a man, by drawing from Western societies' acceptance of the consumption of alcohol as a 'rite of passage' for young men. Such alcohol advertisements associate drinking alcohol with practices of masculine identity in which women are peripheral and 'other' than men if present at all. The literature suggests that being a man is often portrayed within a framework of a nostalgic traditional masculinity that plays on young men's uncertainties and anxieties about being a man. The identities portrayed for young men in some of the more recent advertisements were that of 'losers', the 'everyday guy', or the 'loveable larrikin' who engaged in 'laddish' behaviours that involved consuming excess alcohol, watching televised sports and doing loutish things. Women remained peripheral or in subservient roles in these advertisements, or in opposition to men. Research with young people suggests that 'laddish' practices are lauded by young men who associate with the 'binge-drinking culture' and who show similar gender values to those men who engage in domestic violence towards women.³⁶

The alcohol industry tries to mask its denigration of women through humour:

When young women were present in alcohol advertisements they were constructed as either 'hotties', or 'bitches' who potentially interfered with men's alcohol consumption and men's relief from work, emotional concerns, and the freedom to be with the mates. Women and other men in these advertisements were to be treated as oppositional to what it is to be a man. Humour was used to consolidate hegemonic masculinity and to appeal to the emerging male market while masking the sexism of these advertisements.³⁷

The history of advertising is riddled with irresponsible behaviour.³⁸ The use of sexism and sexuality to promote alcohol is one of the most delinquent examples:

The constant use of sexism and sexuality in alcohol advertising has the potential to contribute both to a perception that otherwise inappropriate behaviour towards women is acceptable in the context of drinking and to the social norm of (excessive) drinking as an essential component of sexual interactions.³⁹

The Commonwealth admits that preventing violence against women means changing the behaviours and norms, in all areas of society, that excuse, justify and even promote violence against women,⁴⁰ but still does next to nothing to restrict alcohol promotion, which is one of the main causes of violence against women.

The alcohol industry patronises and demeans women through cynical and sexist marketing. Alcohol promotion aims to make alcohol use more socially acceptable among women. It targets women by pretending that alcohol is a balm for the stress of raising children. It encourages women to spend their free-time consuming alcohol after a day of work. It pushes alcohol to women by using sweet flavours such as

³⁵ *Ibid* at 397.

³⁶ *Ibid* at 397-398.

³⁷ *Ibid* at 398

³⁸ [Facebook ads have enabled discrimination based on gender, race and age. We need to know how 'dark ads' affect Australians \(theconversation.com\)](https://www.theconversation.com/australian-ads-have-enabled-discrimination-based-on-gender-race-and-age-we-need-to-know-how-dark-ads-affect-australians)

³⁹ Editorial, *Journal of Public Affairs*, February-May 2010, 2.

⁴⁰ Fourth Action Plan: National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010-2022, page 19.

“cherry”, referring to “healthier” options such as gluten free or vegan, or using words such as “natural” or “organic”.

It uses the colour pink on products or at events to try to appeal to women: “Chick beer” comes in pink packaging with fewer calories ... Booze with the name “Mummy’s Time Out” targets mums starved for happy hour. And even clothing stores are cashing in, offering T-shirts with slogans like “wine time” drawn in whimsical calligraphy ... the trend towards female-focused marketing [has led] to the emergence of multiple new alcohol products targeting female customers, from fruit-flavoured beers to low-calorie beverages. We see a focus on slimness, weight, pink packaging, glitter, messages of sisterhood, all-female friendships, motherhood, and also the all-time favourite, sexiness.”⁴¹

The alcohol industry pays Instagram influencers to feature alcohol in their posts, who do not disclose they are paid by the alcohol industry - most Australian Instagram users are women. And the alcohol industry hypocritically sponsors breast cancer organisations or breast cancer research even though alcohol use causes breast cancer.

The alcohol industry portrays women as weak and in need alcohol to cope with stress and anxiety. “When it comes to alcohol, marketing to particular groups can have worrying consequences ... Kate Baily, a West Sussex-based podcast host and the co-author of the book *Love Yourself Sober: A Self-Care Guide to Alcohol-Free Living for Busy Mothers*, says the impact of alcohol marketing on mothers is an area of concern. Feminised marketing popularised concepts like ‘mummy juice’ and ‘wine o’clock’, linking them to how busy women navigated anxiety. That meant, says Baily, that “women were using alcohol [as] an acceptable face of self-medication and stress release. We were sold it as this kind of reward at the end of the day.”⁴²

The alcohol industry preys on women’s anxieties and insecurities over body image. “Many female targeted brands now have a ‘low calorie’ option. These products and their marketing draw on women’s insecurities and anxieties over body image and present the drinks as a solution to concerns over the calorific content of standard brands, and use the ideal of female slimness to influence brand choice. Lifestyle messages that appeal to gender stereotypes are also commonly used, such as a focus on slimness/weight; all-female friendships; motherhood; appearance, fashion and beauty, and sexiness. Alcohol marketing is also dominated by stereotypical feminine imagery, such as the colour pink, glitter and floral images, and opportunities to win stereotypical feminine accessories such as make up and fake tan. Such messages are not only problematic in that they may also appeal to the youth market, but in how they reinforce a narrow definition of femininity, and women’s interests and leisure as being dominated by appearance.”⁴³

The rates of domestic violence against women in Australia are very high. On average, one woman per week is murdered by her current or former partner in Australia. According to a former Sex Discrimination Commissioner domestic violence is the gravest human rights abuse happening in Australia today. As of 2016, 1.625 million women, or 17% of Australian women aged over 18, had experienced partner violence at some time in their life since the age of 15.⁴⁴ Some are at greater risk of family, domestic and sexual violence, particularly Indigenous women, young women, pregnant women, women separating from their partners, women with disability and women experiencing financial hardship.⁴⁵

⁴¹ [The feminisation of alcohol marketing - BBC Worklife](#)

⁴² [The feminisation of alcohol marketing - BBC Worklife](#)

⁴³ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Blog “It’s time to call time on the use of gender stereotypes in alcohol marketing” Amanda Atkinson, 12 November 2019.

⁴⁴ Anne Summers, *The Choice: Violence or Poverty – domestic violence and its consequences in Australia today*, July 2022, page 20.

⁴⁵ [Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia, 2018, Summary - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

Women are more vulnerable to domestic and other violence than men. Women are far more likely than men to be afraid of, hospitalised by or killed by an intimate partner. Women are about three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.

Alcohol use causes other problems which lead to violence against women. Alcohol use causes a variety of problems which in turn cause stress, and therefore lead to violence. Alcohol use can also exacerbate financial difficulties and other stressors, which are themselves risk factors for intimate partner violence against women.

Alcohol-related domestic violence damages women’s physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health. The types of alcohol-related violence women experience from their partners include severe physical abuse; “moderate” physical abuse; sexual abuse such as pressure and coercion to have sex; emotional abuse; economic abuse; and controlling behaviours such as monitoring or restricting activities.⁴⁶

Intimate partner violence contributes an estimated 5.1% to the disease burden in Australian women aged 18-44 years, which is higher than any other risk factor in the study, including tobacco use, high cholesterol or use of illicit drugs.⁴⁷

The Parliament of Australia noted that the consequences of domestic violence for victims include: anxiety, depression and other emotional distress, physical stress symptoms, suicide attempts, alcohol and drug abuse, sleep disturbances, reduced coping and problem-solving skills, loss of self-esteem and confidence, social isolation, fear of starting new relationships, living in fear, and other major impacts on quality of life.⁴⁸

The World Health Organisation says that domestic violence may lead to a host of negative sexual and reproductive health consequences for women, including unintended and unwanted pregnancy, abortion and unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, pregnancy complications, pelvic inflammatory disease, urinary tract infections and sexual dysfunction. Domestic violence can have a direct effect on women’s sexual and reproductive health, such as sexually transmitted infections through forced sexual intercourse within marriage, or through indirect pathways, for example, by making it difficult for women to negotiate contraceptive or condom use with their partner.⁴⁹

A history of experiencing violence is a risk factor for many diseases and conditions. The more severe the abuse, the greater its impact on a woman’s physical and mental health, and the impact over time of different types and multiple episodes of abuse appears to be cumulative.⁵⁰

Alcohol causes sexual violence against women. Alcohol is a major cause of sexual violence against women. Alcohol is the main substance involved in date rape, and in other rapes: “... 88% of rapists on college campuses use alcohol during or just before the rape ... It’s not clear whether alcohol consumption in men prompts the desire to commit sexual violence ... or whether the desire to commit sexual violence prompts alcohol consumption (i.e. a man realizes that he wants to rape someone, and so drinks to work up the nerve) but it’s clear that men who are drunk are more likely to hurt women”.⁵¹ The Victorian Parliament concluded

⁴⁶ Wilson, Graham and Taft “Living the cycle of drinking and violence: A qualitative study of women’s experience of alcohol-related intimate partner violence” *Drug and Alcohol Review*, January 2017, 36, 115 at 119.

⁴⁷ Fourth Action Plan: National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010-2022, page 25.

⁴⁸ [Measuring domestic violence and sexual assault against women – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au)

⁴⁹ World Health Organisation “Understanding and addressing violence against women” pages 5-6.

⁵⁰ World Health Organisation “Understanding and addressing violence against women” pages 5-6.

⁵¹ The Guardian article 3 January 2020 “The temperance movement linked booze to domestic violence. Did it have a point?”

that there is a “strong association” between alcohol use and sexual violence, due to the disinhibiting effect of alcohol and the use of alcohol as a strategy for perpetrating assault.⁵²

Adverse impacts of alcohol-related violence on women go well beyond the specific violent incidents.

Women may make great efforts to anticipate abuse and try to keep safe, for example: trying to limit or delay their partner’s alcohol use; reducing potential triggers for example keeping the house clean; using sex to keep their partner happy or encourage sleep; being quiet, vigilant and treading lightly; avoiding their partner and going into lockable rooms.⁵³

Alcohol-related domestic violence destroys women’s quality of life. Women living with alcohol-related domestic violence experience a precarious existence filled with the unpredictability of drunken violence.⁵⁴

Alcohol-related domestic or sexual violence causes women to use alcohol more. Research shows that women who have been physically or sexually abused as children are far more likely to drink, have alcohol-related problems, or become dependent on alcohol, and that physical abuse during adulthood, which is suffered more by women than men, seems to raise a woman’s risk of using and abusing alcohol.⁵⁵

Increased use of alcohol by females who have suffered domestic violence increases their vulnerability to further violence. “Alcohol marketers tend to see the lower rate of women drinking as an opportunity to encourage more to drink, often depicting drinking by women as a symbol of empowerment and equality. However, studies of domestic violence show that violence against the woman is more likely if the woman as well as the man has been drinking, which may decrease rather than increase her power in an intimate relationship”.⁵⁶

Alcohol-related domestic violence increases women’s alcohol use. Women who drink heavily are at increased risk of domestic violence and of developing alcohol problems following victimisation.⁵⁷

Women are more vulnerable than men to health problems from alcohol use. Studies show that women start to have alcohol-related problems sooner and at lower drinking levels than men and for multiple reasons. On average, women weigh less than men. Also, alcohol resides predominantly in body water, and pound for pound, women have less water in their bodies than men. This means that after a woman and a man of the same weight drink the same amount of alcohol, the woman’s blood alcohol concentration will tend to be higher, putting her at greater risk for harm. Women are more likely than men to develop a range of problems due to alcohol use including liver damage, heart disease, brain damage. Women who use alcohol are more likely to get breast cancer compared with those who do not.⁵⁸

Women have barriers to accessing treatment for their alcohol use due to their sex.⁵⁹ For example, the disproportionate family responsibilities assumed by women may impede their access to treatment.

Biological mothers of children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) experience poor well-being.

On average, caring for a child with FASD is much more demanding than caring for non-FASD children, which disproportionately impacts women, since they do more child-care than men. Biological mothers often suffer

⁵² Parliament of Victoria *Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption Final Report 2006 Volume 1*, pages 161-162.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 121.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 123.

⁵⁵ A Harvard health article - [Women and Alcohol - HelpGuide.org](https://www.health.harvard.edu/women-and-alcohol)

⁵⁶ World Health Organisation *Reducing the harm from alcohol by regulating cross-border alcohol marketing, advertising and promotion*, 2022, xix.

⁵⁷ Parliament of Victoria *Inquiry into Strategies to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption Final Report 2006 Volume 1*, page 159.

⁵⁸ United States National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism fact sheet “Women and alcohol”.

⁵⁹ Alcohol and Drug Foundation factsheet “Treatment – the gender divide explained” 4 September 2020.

additional adverse outcomes due to feeling guilty about their child's FASD, and stress from caring for a child with complex needs.⁶⁰

Women are disproportionately affected when children are victims of domestic violence. Alcohol-related domestic violence causes trauma for children who experience domestic violence such as emotional and behavioural problems, lost school time and poor school performance, adjustment problems, stress, reduced social competence, bullying, running away from home, and relationship problems.⁶¹ Women do more childcare than men and are therefore disproportionately impacted when children suffer domestic violence.

Promoting alcohol limits women's careers. Alcohol use was identified as a major risk factor contributing to bullying and sexual harassment and assault in Parliament.⁶² In many workplaces women miss out on career opportunities because they do not use alcohol and so are not seen as "one of the boys".⁶³

Alcohol-related sexual assault and harassment in workplaces has severe effects Research indicates that experiences of bullying and sexual harassment can negatively affect both the physical and mental health of individuals. Some people experience poorer sleep and cardiovascular health impacts because of stress. Some people experience suicidal ideation. Experiencing misconduct can also affect careers and financial security. Anxiety, fear, low self-esteem and self-blame can endure for years, with some also experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. Interpersonal relationships with intimate partners, as well as friendships and family relationships, can all be affected following sexual assault.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ [How to support families living with FASD - Emerging Minds](#)

⁶¹ [Measuring domestic violence and sexual assault against women – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](#)

⁶² Australian Human Rights Commission report, *Set the Standard*, 16.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 101.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 40.