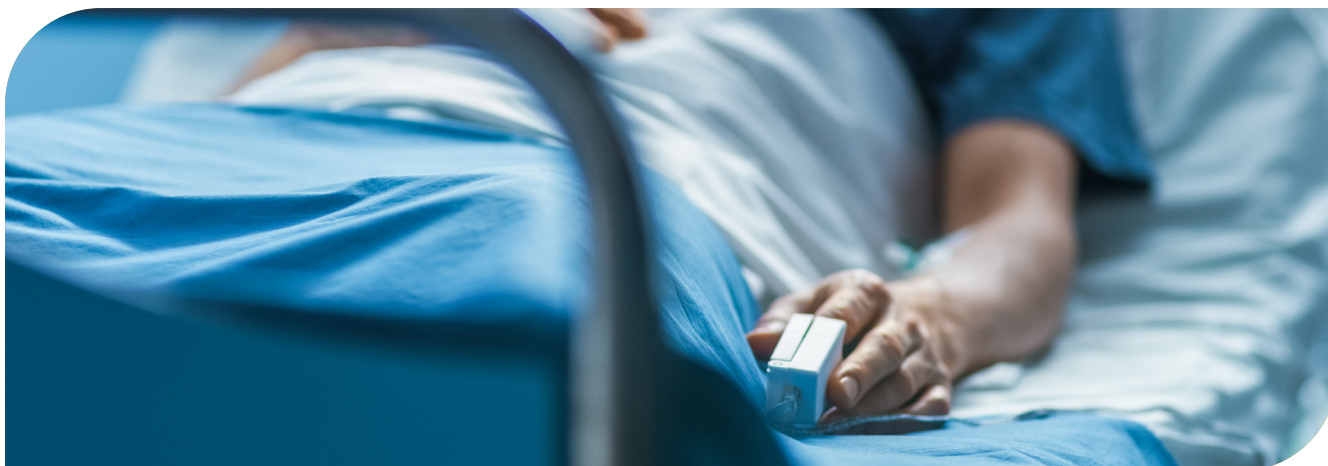


Five weeks to watch: what we can learn from alcohol harms and digital advertising data

February 2025



Introduction

Alcohol products cause substantial harm to Australians, with alcohol use causally linked to over 200 disease and injury conditions.¹ Nearly 6,000 people lose their lives every year and more than 144,000 people are hospitalised from alcohol use, making alcohol use one of our nation's greatest preventive health challenges.² Australia is currently experiencing some of the highest rates of alcohol-induced deaths in over 20 years.³

Alcohol promotion contributes to alcohol harm. For children and adolescents, exposure to alcohol marketing increases the likelihood that they will start to drink alcohol at a younger age and that they will go on to drink alcohol at higher-risk levels.⁴ For people at higher risk of experiencing an alcohol use disorder, recent research shows that alcohol marketing can increase positive alcohol-related emotions and cognitions as well as cue alcohol cravings.⁵

This brief report presents the five weeks across a year when alcohol harms are highest in Victoria. It also examines the marketing practices of alcohol companies on Meta during these periods.

Methods

This report draws on two datasets across the period of 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023:

1. digital advertising published on Meta platforms by Australian alcohol producers and retailers
2. alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances in Victoria drawn from the National Ambulance Surveillance System (NASS), provided by Turning Point.

Digital alcohol advertising has been collected from the Meta Ad Library, which indexes currently running ads on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and Meta's Audience Network using a proprietary ad collection tool.⁶ The 351 advertisers included in this analysis represent major alcohol producers and retailers in Australia.

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, 58,335 distinct alcohol advertisements were collected. The data presents the start date of each advertisement published on Meta platforms, and each advertisement is counted once when it is first published (and therefore represents new advertisements rather than total advertisements in a given period).

NASS data is aggregated from electronic patient records generated by state-based ambulance services, in this case Ambulance Victoria.⁷ Records are automatically categorised as alcohol and other drug-related, using keyword searches by Ambulance Victoria before supplying data to NASS. Turning Point coded each record using a bespoke coding protocol which includes more than 140 variables about the attendance and patient. Alcohol-intoxication attendances are those where paramedics have identified that the patient has consumed more than four standard drinks (i.e., showing clinical indicators of intoxication).



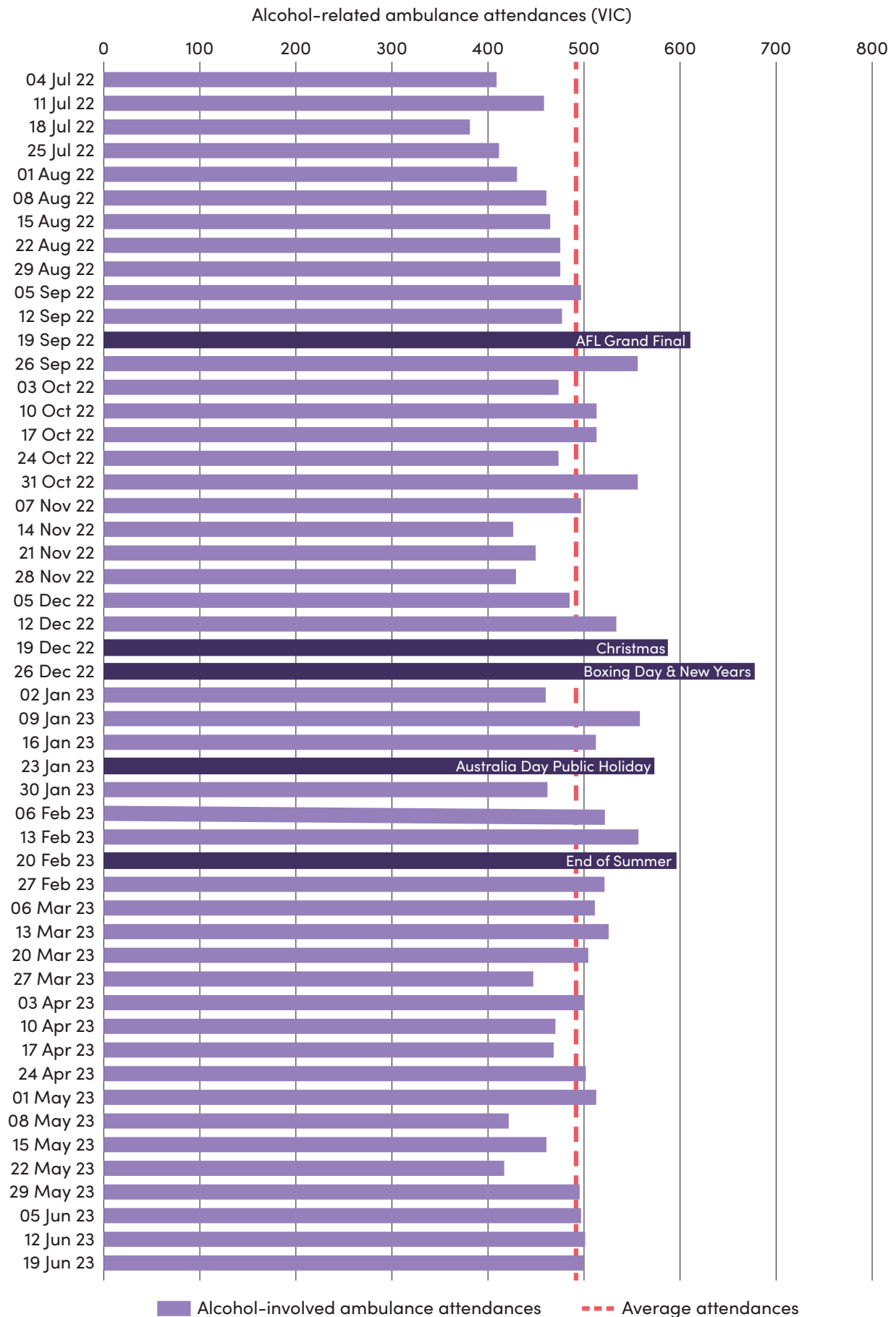
Alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances and digital alcohol advertising

Across the 12-month period, there was a weekly average of 489 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances. We identified the five weeks across a year when there were the highest levels of alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances in Victoria, with these five weeks having a weekly average of 607 attendances (Figure 1). These five weeks primarily spanned periods when there were holidays/public holidays, and major sporting events:

- End of year holiday period (Boxing Day to New Years): 26 December 2022 – 1 January 2023
- AFL grand final: 19 September 2022 – 25 September 2022
- Summer festivities (end of summer celebrations): 20 February 2023 – 26 February 2023
- Christmas: 19 December 2022 – 25 December 2022
- Australia Day public holiday: 23 January 2023 – 29 January 2023

During these times, alcohol companies published 5,103 new alcohol advertisements on Meta platforms. These advertisements heavily drew on and tied alcohol use to the festivities and cultural events during these periods. The advertisements also often contained buttons that directly linked from an advertisement to a platform where alcohol was sold. Examples are presented below.

Figure 1. Alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances in Victoria 4 July 2022 – 19 Jun 2023



End of year holiday period (Boxing Day to New Years)

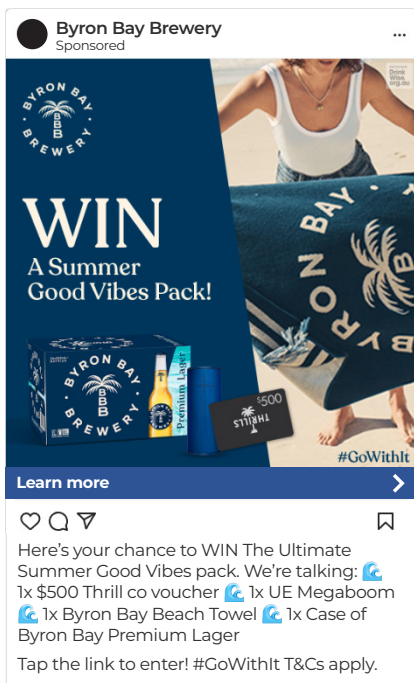
26 December 2022 – 1 January 2023:

» 676 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances

» 1,061 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms

The highest period where people who experienced harm from alcohol requiring attendance by paramedics was during the week spanning the Boxing Day and New Years public holidays.

During this period, alcohol companies portrayed alcohol in advertisements as an “essential” for ringing in the new year, enjoying the summer weather, and spending time and celebrating with family and friends. Companies discounted alcohol products on Boxing Day to encourage bulk buying before New Year’s Eve, including offering free products and merchandise.



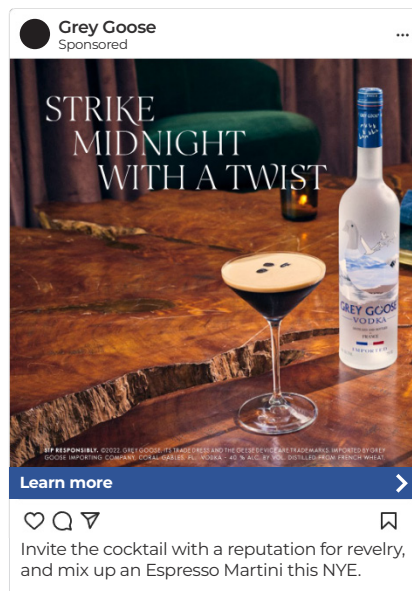
Byron Bay Brewery
Sponsored

WIN
A Summer Good Vibes Pack!

Learn more

Here's your chance to WIN The Ultimate Summer Good Vibes pack. We're talking: 🎁
1x \$500 Thrill co voucher 🎁 1x UE Megaboom 🎁
1x Byron Bay Beach Towel 🎁 1x Case of Byron Bay Premium Lager

Tap the link to enter! #GoWithIt T&Cs apply.



Grey Goose
Sponsored

STRIKE MIDNIGHT WITH A TWIST

Learn more

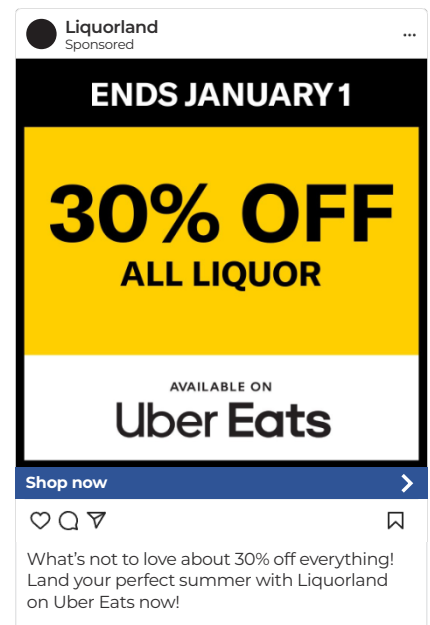
Invite the cocktail with a reputation for revelry, and mix up an Espresso Martini this NYE.



Langton's
Sponsored

Shop now

From lavish lunches to New Year's toasts, mark your special occasions with fine wines and savour every moment. These essentials cover everything from accessible classics to the top-tier elite, and are perfect for holiday lunches, the Boxing Day wind-down, or the luxe NYE soiree. Secure some memory-making curated crowd-pleasers that'll set the tone for your next gathering or gala.



Liquorland
Sponsored

ENDS JANUARY 1

30% OFF
ALL LIQUOR

AVAILABLE ON
Uber Eats

Shop now

What's not to love about 30% off everything! Land your perfect summer with Liquorland on Uber Eats now!

AFL Grand Final

19 September 2022 – 25 September 2022:

» 607 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances

» 764 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms

The week of the AFL Grand Final had the second highest number of alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances. Advertisements included sport themes and promoted rapid delivery of alcohol into homes “so you don’t miss a second of the big game.” Special sales and giveaways such as “Win a \$15k Bundy Footy Room” and prize lotteries were common promotion tactics used by alcohol companies.

The weeks covering the NRL Grand Final (week of 26 September 2022) and the Melbourne Cup (week of 31 October 2022) were also notable for alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances that were above the yearly average, with 554 and 555 attendances respectively compared to the average of 489 attendances.

Carlton Draught
Sponsored

WIN
A \$15K BUNDBY FOOTY ROOM

THURSDAY TO SUNDAY
AVAILABLE ON Uber Eats
\$15 PACKS
HERE'S TO THE CHEERS SQUAD
150+ PRODUCTS

Shop now

Here's to the cheers squad with \$15 selected six packs this week. Your favourites delivered to your door (so you don't miss a second of the big game)

Jimmy Brings
Sponsored

JIMMY BRINGS
WINE, BEER & SPIRITS IN 30 MINS

CAN'T LEAVE THE GAME?

GET JIMMY

Download on the App Store | GET IT ON Google Play | DrinkWise.

Shop now

It's been a hot minute... Are you thirsty? Why waste time going to the bottle-O when you can get drinks delivered straight to your door? Order now via the website or app and we'll be there in minutes!

Match to Win is back and bigger than ever for footy finals! Crack open a Carlton Draught from any specially marked case and match 3 caps to win up to \$6 million in prizes, like a year of beer, AFL football membership, corporate box tickets - plus a whole lot more. So, grab yourself a case, get the mates 'round, and start matching to win today! T&Cs apply visit www.matchtowin.beer.com.au for more info

Bottlemart
Sponsored

Get ready for footy frenzy! Check out our latest catalogue for all the hottest deals and promotions!

Summer festivities (end of summer celebrations)

In the week of 20 February 2023 – 26 February 2023:

» 594 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances

» 1,057 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms

Alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances remained high for the last week of February, which was the only week amongst the five highest harms weeks that did not include a public holiday in Victoria.

During this week, alcohol companies promoted alcohol as a way to extend the festive summer season and “keep the summer vibes rolling.” Alcohol companies during this period also used narratives around new year resolutions in their marketing, particularly with advertisements focusing on health and saving money.

For example, advertisements pushed products that claimed to be low in sugar or carbohydrates and “wallet-friendly”.

Jacob's Creek
Sponsored

Shop now

Swelteringly hot summer days call for deliciously cool Lively Bunch Pinot Grigio. Available at your local First Choice and Liquorland.

SipnSave
Sponsored

START AT
SipnSave

DRINKS TO MATCH
YOUR LIFESTYLE

Shop now

Achieve your summer goals with our Balanced Lifestyle selection 🍷 We have zero alcohol, organic, low-cal and more! Download our app and start now!

Cellarbrations
Sponsored

Shop now

Looking for an alternative drink to keep your New Year's resolution on track? Browse no alc, low alc, low carb, and more in our range of Different Drops.

Somersby
Sponsored

BEST SHARED WITH FRIENDS.
ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL.

Shop now

Celebrate Summer with a refreshing Somersby Super Crisp #IsntThatWonderful 🍏

Christmas

19 December 2022 – 25 December 2022:

» 585 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances

» 1,327 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms

The week of the Christmas holidays recorded high alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances and proceeded a four-week period of increasing alcohol advertisements on digital platforms.

Alcohol companies launched Christmas-related advertising campaigns in late November, promoting alcohol as a gift option and offering sales to incentivise stockpiling for Christmas celebrations. In so doing, companies positioned alcohol as part of the holiday tradition.

Bomby Sapphire
Sponsored

'Tis the Season for Holiday Cheer

Get the facts. Be DrinkWise.

Santa left you some cranberries, lime and tonic in your stocking? Sounds like you were Bomby Sapphire good this year.

Dan Murphy's
Sponsored

DAN'S DAILY

The best spirits to gift these holidays

POWERED BY DAN MURPHY'S Choose to DrinkWise.

Shop now

9 gift ideas that'll expand their cocktail kit or set them up for a holiday sip.

BWS
Sponsored

BEVVIES WORTH SHARING

2 FOR \$29

6 PACK

Shop now

HO! HO! HO! How about a quick trip to BWS to top up your Christmas cheer with some big ol' savings.

Vinomfo
Sponsored

ADVENT WINE CALENDAR

Shop now

- The ultimate Christmas treat
- 12 bottles of Christmas delights
- With a wine guide and a tote to boot
- Fast Delivery
- Free Returns

Australia Day public holiday

23 January 2023 – 29 January 2023:

» 572 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances

» 895 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms

Alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances also peaked in late January, across the week of the Australia Day public holiday.

During this time, alcohol retailers continued to publish summer focused advertisements, with summer-themed promotions, and drew on Australian cultural events like cricket and Triple J's Hottest 100.

Smirnoff
Sponsored

SMIRNOFF
SELTZER

Learn more

Ur key takeaways for this vid: - Smirnoff Seltzer Watermelon Marg is a thing - Smirnoff Seltzer Spicy Marg is also a thing - Both are yummy - Summer is good - Bold pops of colour are in

4 Pines Brewing Company
Sponsored

114 WINS
A FLOPPY GREEN

BUY ANY SPECIALLY MARKED 4 PINES PACIFIC ALE, PALE ALE, OR ULTRA LOW PACKS FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN

There's no better reason to put down your beers, than to put on your 4 Pines Floppy Green! Pick up a specially marked pack of Pacific Ale, Pale Ale, or Ultra Low for your chance to WIN!

Promo ends: 30/04/23. T&Cs apply, see link in bio for details.

Liquorland
Sponsored

LIQUORLAND

Shop now

Land your summer with Coopers Original Pale Ale, an instant crowd pleaser. Shop now and be ready for any gathering in the sun.

BoozeBud
Sponsored

Celebrate AUSSIE HEROES

Up to 30% OFF

Learn more

Raise a glass to our Aussie Heroes with BoozeBud! 🍷 Get up to 30% off all Aussie beers, wines and spirits...

- 📦 Same-day delivery available
- 🏷️ Price match guarantee
- 👤 New customers, use code BESTBUD for an extra 10% off

Why pay more for top-notch Aussie tipples? Shop now and stock up!



The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is a not-for-profit organisation with a vision for an Australia free from alcohol harms – where communities are healthy and well and where laws, policies and programs are fair, equitable and just. Working with local communities, people with lived experience of alcohol harm, values-aligned organisations, health professionals, researchers and governments across the nation, we are improving the health and wellbeing of everyone in Australia.

To learn more about FARE, visit www.fare.org.au



Turning Point is a national treatment, research, and education centre that provides leadership in the alcohol and other drug, gambling, and mental health sectors. Combining innovative clinical and population health research and expert policy advice with service innovation, surveillance, system enhancements, capacity building, and specialist support, Turning Point empowers people, communities, services, and governments to respond to current and emerging alcohol, other drug, and gambling harms. Turning Point is part of Eastern Health and is affiliated with Monash University.

To learn more about Turning Point, visit www.turningpoint.org.au



The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) is a pioneer in health promotion – the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. Our primary focus is promoting good health and preventing chronic disease. Our work includes creating and funding world-class interventions, conducting vital research to advance Victoria's population health, producing and supporting public campaigns to promote a healthier Victoria, and providing transformational expertise and insights to government.

To learn more about VicHealth, visit www.vichealth.vic.gov.au



The Centre for Digital Cultures & Societies (DCS) is a Centre within the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at The University of Queensland. Researchers at DCS address questions of power and ethics, industrial transformation, and the relationships between digital technologies and our cultural practices and expressions. Our researchers come from across the humanities, arts, and social sciences to envision digital cultures that enrich our relationships with one another, facilitate social cohesion, foster cultural understanding and belonging, and create societies that are fair and just.

To learn more about DCS, visit www.hass.uq.edu.au/centre-digital-cultures-societies

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