

Media release

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Alcohol tax cuts risk more long-term harm to nation

The [Alcohol and Drug Foundation](#) (ADF) joins more than 80 community leaders and organisations in signing an open letter calling on the Morrison Government to abandon its irresponsible plan to make alcohol more accessible.

The letter urges the Government to prioritise the health, wellbeing and safety of families and communities given the significant increase in alcohol sales during the pandemic.

Alcohol misuse in Australia costs a staggering \$36 billion per year, touching every part of our community, economy, and health system. In 2019-2020, alcohol-induced deaths increased by 8.3 per cent and calls to the national alcohol hotline have doubled since 2019.

Alcohol retail sales have grown substantially over the course of the pandemic – with alcohol companies raking in an additional \$3.6 billion in 2021, compared to 2019.

With increasing alcohol sales comes increased harms, says ADF CEO Dr Erin Lalor, which will impact our long-term national health and well-being, unless we act now.

“Prior to 2019, harmful alcohol and drug use had been trending down nationally - but during the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve seen a concerning increase,” said Dr Lalor. “Making alcohol more accessible will further undermine the progress we made before the pandemic and put people at higher risk of developing problematic alcohol use.”

If the spike in alcohol-related deaths and harms is not addressed quickly, says Dr Lalor, we’re likely to see corresponding increases in mental health issues, suicide, crimes, road traffic accidents, domestic violence, emergency department presentations, housing insecurity and unemployment that will take decades to address.

“Taxation is globally acknowledged to be one of the most effective ways to combat harm caused by alcohol products,” Dr Lalor said. “That the alcohol industry would call for

action that weakens one of our best lines of defence against alcohol harms is deeply concerning.”

More investment in support services, infrastructure, and community awareness campaigns will help us to turn around increases in alcohol use before they become set-in-stone habits and strip years off our national life expectancy.

“After years of increased pressure and harm because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government should prioritise investment to address the increased demand, not risk making the situation even more devastating for families who are already struggling with addiction issues,” added Dr Lalor.

Read the Alcohol Tax Open Letter: <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-Tax-Open-Letter.pdf>

If you're looking for support services for family and friends who use alcohol or other drugs, visit adf.org.au/path2help, an online portal that asks a simple set of questions to provide information and support services based on each person's specific needs and circumstances.

For information and support, people can visit the Alcohol and Drug Foundation's website adf.org.au or contact DrugInfo on 1300 85 85 84 or druginfo@adf.org.au.

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For interviews and media enquiries, please call the Alcohol and Drug Foundation's media team on 0430 948 380 or email media@adf.org.au.

About the Alcohol and Drug Foundation: Celebrating over 60 years of service to the community, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation is one of Australia's leading organisations committed to preventing and minimising alcohol and other drug harms in communities around the nation. The Foundation reaches millions of Australians through sporting clubs, community organisations, health care settings and schools, providing educational information, drug and alcohol prevention programs and advocating for lives unlimited by alcohol and drug harm.