

Policy Brief

Best practice regulation of the online sale and delivery of alcohol

Research shows the more available alcohol is, the greater the harms in the community.ⁱ Harms from alcohol in Western Australia are already unacceptably highⁱⁱ and the expansion of the online alcohol marketplace is increasing the availability and accessibility of alcohol. The risks associated with the online sale and delivery of alcohol are likely to increase where robust age verification processes and checks for intoxication are absent, and where rapid, late-night, and unattended deliveries are allowed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Cancer Council WA welcomes the introduction of the WA Liquor Delivery Regulations in February 2022. However, our recent report *Alcohol delivery in WA: Results from an audit of online alcohol retailers prior to and following the introduction of WA Liquor Delivery Regulations*^{iv} highlights a number of continued high-risk aspects in regard to the marketing, selling and delivery of alcohol. The audit shows that alcohol can be delivered cheap, fast and late at night to Perth, and that cheap alcohol is also available for delivery to WA regions. This places many people in our communities at risk, especially our children, people with alcohol dependence, and people experiencing violence in the home. As such, there is a need for further sensible controls to help keep WA communities healthy and safe.

There is an important window of opportunity through the review of the WA Liquor Delivery Regulations to ensure that the responsible service of alcohol is upheld whether alcohol is sold and supplied through a venue, liquor store or online for delivery. Informed by the *Alcohol Change Australia position statement: Preventing harm from online sales and home delivery of alcohol in Australian communities*^v, and in consideration of our audit findings, Cancer Council WA have identified the following priorities for urgent liquor reform:

- **Require that alcohol deliveries are not left unattended at the delivery address, and proof of age is checked in all cases to minimise risk of children and young people accessing alcohol bought online.**
Nine retailers in our audit already state this policy in their delivery terms, requiring that all alcohol deliveries are handed over to an appropriate person and not left unattended at any time.
- **Restrict all alcohol delivery hours to between 10am and 10pm to minimise risks from alcohol use in the home late at night, such as the risks of family violence and suicide, which peak late at night.**
Only two retailers in our audit offered delivery after 10pm meaning that regulating now will have minimal impact on businesses while helping to ensure future market expansions don't increase the risk associated with alcohol delivery late at night.
- **Introduce a mandatory delay of two hours between alcohol order and delivery to prevent impulsive alcohol purchases and reduce the risk of rapid delivery enabling people to drink to high-risk levels.**
Nine retailers in our audit, mostly larger chain stores offered rapid delivery in under 2 hours to Perth. Many of these offered cheap alcohol products and negligible delivery costs.

- **Require online alcohol retailers to verify that people buying alcohol are 18 years or older using an independent age verification mechanism.**

None of the retailers in our audit required digital age verification, however this measure has already been introduced in NSW regulations, making it likely that national businesses operating in WA will have taken steps to adopt the required technology.

- **Require alcohol delivery businesses to report data to the liquor regulator on the number, time of day, and locations (by postcode) of alcohol deliveries, and the volume and retail sale price of alcohol delivered.**

Access to such data would support researchers to generate independent, robust evidence to inform further reviews of the regulations as the online marketplace evolves.

The Alcohol Programs Team at Cancer Council WA works to prevent and reduce the impacts of alcohol on the WA community, including as a cause of cancer. Cancer Council WA is concerned about the increased availability and access to alcohol provided via online sales and delivery. At a minimum, the measures recommended above would reduce the existing risk and prevent the expansion of the most high-risk aspects of the online sale and delivery of alcohol in Perth and in regional WA.

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ⁱ The SAFER technical package: five areas of intervention at national and subnational levels. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. [Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/SAFER/alcohol-availability>]

ⁱⁱ WA's Hidden Crisis: Harm from alcohol. Cancer Council Western Australia, WA Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies, Alcohol and Drug Foundation and Telethon Kids Institute; Perth, Western Australia. May 2022. [Retrieved from: <https://cancerwa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-06-WAs-Hidden-Crisis-Harm-from-alcohol-FINAL.pdf>]

ⁱⁱⁱ Mojica-Perez, Y., Callinan, S. & Livingston, M. 2019. Alcohol home delivery services: An investigation of use and risk. Centre for Alcohol Policy and Research, La Trobe University. [Retrieved from: <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-home-delivery-services.pdf>]

^{iv} Bury, K., Stafford, J. & Keric, D. 2022. Alcohol Delivery in WA: Results from an audit of online alcohol retailers prior to and following the introduction of WA Liquor Delivery Regulations. Cancer Council WA, Perth, Western Australia. [Retrieved from: https://cancerwa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-11-14_Cancer_Council_WA-report_Alcohol-Delivery-WA.pdf]

^v Position statement: Preventing harm from online sales and home delivery of alcohol in Australian communities. Alcohol Change Australia; Melbourne, VIC. June 2022. [Personal communication]