

POSITION PAPER MANAGEMENT OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

JULY 2024

ABOUT THE KIMBERLEY REGIONAL GROUP

The Kimberley Regional Group (KRG) is an alliance of the four Kimberley Shires, being the Shire of Broome, the Shire of Derby West Kimberley, the Shire of Halls Creek and the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley. Our Vision is to maintain and enhance the rich diversity and liveability of the Kimberley for its people and the world. Collaboratively the group seeks to drive positive impact across the region through improved social, economic and cultural outcomes. This paper is designed to highlight the issues as known to Local Government at the time of writing and the potential pathways that are supported.

CONTEXT

Governments must balance the part that alcohol plays in Australian society with the risks to health, safety, and wellbeing its misuse can pose for the community. Alcohol often accompanies socialising and celebrations, generates employment and revenue, activates streetscapes, and enhances local identity as an entertainment and tourism destination; however, alcohol misuse contributes significantly to health and social issues.

- Alcohol contributes significantly to violence, poor health and harm in Australia and places a major burden on law enforcement resources¹.
- In the Kimberley 75 percent of family assaults and 66 percent of all violence incidents involved alcohol use².
- Key areas in which alcohol has an impact across the region include poor health, mortality rates³, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and social impacts such as increased poverty, crime rates, rates of family and domestic violence, child abuse and neglect and reduced labour market participation.
- The abuse of alcohol and other drugs (AOD)⁴ is prevalent across the Kimberley, with an estimated per capita annual consumption of pure alcohol far higher than the national annual average⁵.
- Whilst amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), including methamphetamine, use is low relative to alcohol and tobacco, it is growing⁶.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are less likely to drink alcohol compared to non-Indigenous Australians. However, of those who do drink, more are likely to drink at risky levels⁷.
- Intergenerational disadvantage has seen some of the most vulnerable people in the region unable to break the cycle of substance abuse and violence.
- Alcohol restrictions, of various forms have been in place since voluntary restrictions were introduced in Halls Creek in 1992. Inconsistent approaches have intensified alcohol misuse by people travelling to different locations to drink. It has led to sly grogging. Also, alcohol restrictions impact on tourists and residents' access to alcohol use and enjoyment.
- After strong advocacy, amendments to the Banned Drinkers Register to increase its effectiveness came into law in November 2023.
- AOD services are unevenly spread across the Kimberley, which is a disadvantage to residents of smaller towns and remote communities.
- Increasing the price of alcohol by imposing taxation and minimum pricing has been found to be directly associated with a reduction in consumption, acute and chronic health concerns, traffic accidents, crime and violent incidents⁸.

ALCOHOL MANAGEMENT IN THE KIMBERLEY

Alcohol management is managed under the Liquor Control Act 1988 and other relevant and applicable legislation. Restrictions include:

Liquor Control Act 1988 (Section 64) Restrictions

Limit or prohibit the sale of alcohol from licensed premises by imposing conditions on liquor licences in relation to trading hours and the purchasing, consuming or possessing alcohol. This includes limiting the number of items that can be purchased in a day or limit sales to light alcohol products only. Restrictions vary between towns⁹.

Liquor Control Act 1988 (Section 175) Restrictions:

Many Aboriginal communities are subject to these restrictions which apply to a declared area and may prohibit the bringing in, possession and consumption of liquor and may provide for penalties to people who contravene the restrictions.

'Dry areas'

Community members are able to declare certain areas, ranging from individual houses up to entire communities, as a 'dry' area where possession or consumption of alcohol completely is completely prohibited.



Banned Drinkers Register (BDR)

The Banned Drinkers Register a register of people prohibited from purchasing and possessing packaged (takeaway) liquor in Western Australia. The Take Away Alcohol Management System (TAMS) is used in conjunction with the Banned Drinkers Register by reducing opportunities for people to purchase quantities above what is mandated within any applicable restriction. TAMS records the amount and type of liquor purchased by any individual within a 24-hour period and automatically alerts retail staff, when any daily purchase limit has been reached.

Voluntary Liquor Accords

Liquor accords are a co-operative arrangement formed under section 64(1b) of the Act aimed at developing safe and well managed environments in and around licensed premises in the local context.

OBJECTIVES

- » **A sustainable, collaborative, and holistic approach to AOD harm minimisation**
- » **A reduction in substance abuse and alcohol related harm**
- » **A reduction in alcohol and drug related crime**
- » **Health outcomes are improved by access to local infrastructure and service support**
- » **A reduction in poverty and disadvantage**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles should inform alcohol and drug management in the Kimberley:

- A collaborative approach between with all relevant Local and Regional Health Service Providers, Indigenous Organizations, State and Federal Government Departments, Businesses and Community Organisations to minimise Alcohol and other Drugs harms within our region.
- A focus on community awareness, education, prevention, and early intervention.
- A harm minimisation and reduction approach.
- A whole of family approach which addresses the underlying causes of Alcohol and other Drug use including co-occurring mental health conditions and complex trauma.
- Community led, co-designed solutions which are coordinated, integrated and includes engagement with local government.
- A data and evidence-based response.
- A response that is culturally lead and centred in cultural strengths.
- Place based responses with access to local services.

POLICY PRIORITIES

1. A consistent approach to alcohol restrictions between regional towns to reduce the economic and social impact of inconsistent restrictions on towns and communities.
2. A Kimberley Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Strategy is developed and resourced
3. A Kimberley Regional Alcohol Action Plan is developed and resourced
4. Improved localised preventative, rehabilitation and wellness services and infrastructure including
 - Expansion of location and community-based specialist drug and alcohol services with options for priority target groups, especially young people.
 - Harm reduction and personal support services.
 - Safe places for intoxicated people.
 - Residential rehabilitation post residential rehabilitation facilities.
 - Community day treatment programs.
 - Low-medical withdrawal (home-based, outpatient and other) services.
 - High/complex withdrawal (inpatient) services.
 - Increased community consultation and liaison services.
 - Increased housing and family and domestic violence support.
5. Increased investment to build and retain a capable alcohol and other drug workforce in the region
6. Greater deterrents to address the issue of illegal supply of alcohol (also known as 'sly grogging') and other drugs, including greater resourcing to implement these initiatives.
7. Adequate police resources to enforce the law.
8. Greater support for local liquor accords so that they can be responsive and nimble to local conditions.
9. A rigorous evaluation of the Banned Drinkers Register in consultation with local government and local communities and services.

ENDNOTES

1. <https://cancerwa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2021-03-04-Factsheet-Alcohol-use-in-WA-drinking-patterns-and-harms.pdf>.
2. Fogliani RVC. *Inquest into the 13 deaths of children and young persons in the Kimberley region, Western Australia. Coroner's Court of Western Australia; February 2018.* https://www.coronerscourt.wa.gov.au//inquest_into_the_13_deaths_of_children_and_young_persons_in_the_kimberley_region.aspx.
3. *The rate of alcohol related deaths in the Kimberley is one of the highest of any region in Western Australia, and significantly higher than the rate for Western Australia as a whole*
4. *Illicit drugs include cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, meth/amphetamines etc as outlined in the National Drug Strategy Survey 2019* <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/77d8ea6e-f071-495c-b71e-3a632237269d/aihw-phe-270.pdf.aspx?inline=true>. And <https://cancerwa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2021-03-04-Factsheet-Alcohol-use-in-WA-drinking-patterns-and-harms.pdf>.
5. Smith, K. (2017). *The cashless debit card trial: A public health, rights-based approach to better health and social outcomes.* *Indigenous L. Bull.*, 8, 22
6. *Consultation summary report Alcohol and other drug services in the Kimberley 2018*, p 14
7. Gray D, Cartwright K, Stearne A, et al. *Review of the harmful use of alcohol among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.* 2018. *Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet.* <https://healthbulletin.org.au/articles/review-of-the-harmful-use-of-alcohol-among-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>
8. *Shanks Research Paper*, p 20.
9. *Research conducted by the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) suggests that alcohol supply restrictions are effective in reducing alcohol consumption when paired with other forms of interventions, including changes in price and taxation, trading hours and minimum drinking and purchase age.* *National Drug Research Institute, Restrictions on the Sale and Supply of Alcohol: Evidence and Outcomes (Report, 2007).*