

Alcohol: What's the harm, what to do

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Where's the risk: Whole population

- Alcohol problems are not restricted to a small proportion of heavy/dependent drinkers
- A large proportion of the population will occasionally consume alcohol at risky levels and this can result in significant costs across the whole community. For example:
 - Over 80% of alcohol consumed by 14-17 year olds is drunk at levels that risk acute harm
 - For adults almost 25% males and 20% females at risk of harm in short-term at least once per month
 - Over 10 years (up to 2002) 2643 young people (15-24) died and over same period 100,000 hospitalised
 - Over 10 years 501 young people (14-17) died
- Good news is that death rate among young is falling but increase in hospitalisations

Consequences impact others, not just drinkers 14+

NSDHS (2010)

	Males	Females	Total
Physical abuse	9.7%	6.6%	8.1%
Put in fear	12.7%	15.8%	14.3%
Any incident	30.6%	26.5%	28.5%

Impact of others' drinking

Room et al study

- Adversely affected in the last 12 months by the drinking of “strangers or people you don't know very well”
 - – 14 questions about specific behaviour or events
 - All harms
 - including noise, annoyance, avoidance 70%
 - More serious harm
 - abuse, threat, damage or worse 43%

What's the evidence for interventions?

- **Alcohol access**
 - **Price and tax**
 - **Physical availability**
 - Hours and days of sale
 - Outlet density
 - Legal drinking age
 - Specific Restrictions in remote communities
- **Drinking context/environment**
- **Risky behaviours/contexts**
 - **Drink-driving**
- **Early intervention and treatment**
- **Control alcohol promotions**
- **Education and persuasion**

Tax and RTDs

- In 1999, before reductions in tax and in the retail price of RTDs in 2000:
 - RTDs were the preferred beverage of about 23% of 12–17-year-old female drinkers.
- By 2005, after the tax decrease,
 - 48% of young females drank RTDs
 - For 12–17-year-old males RTD consumption increased from 6% to 14%, a small share compared with spirits (39%) and beer (33%).
- Suggests that young Australians do alter their beverage choices in response to price changes.

MJA report

using Nielsen data

- In the 3 months after the April 2008 tax increase:
 - 91 million fewer standard drinks were sold as RTDs than in the same months in the previous year.
 - Standard drinks sold as spirits and beer increased but wine sales decreased.
 - The increase in spirit and beer sales (48 million standard drinks) was only 53% of the 91 million fewer RTD drinks sold.

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- There has been some substitution
- Overall there has been a significant reduction in all alcohol consumed

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- **Unknown specific impact on young people**

Minimum legal drinking age

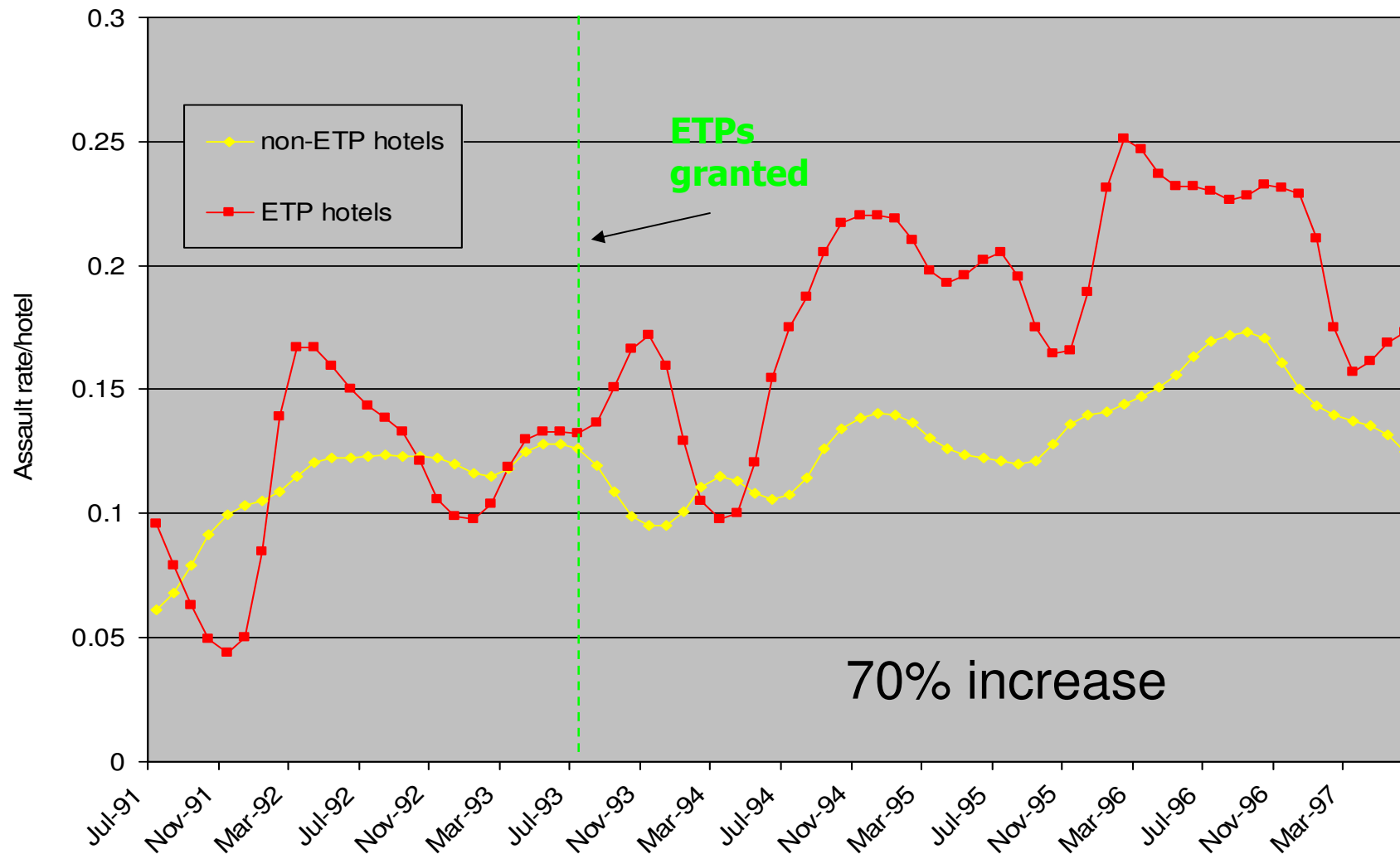
- Australian and overseas evidence consistent and strong
 - Decrease drinking age = increase in drinking and harm
 - Increase drinking age = decrease in drinking and harm
- Contentious but worth discussing?

Research on extended trading hours

Longer/extended trading hours associated with:

- Higher levels of violence in and around licensed premises
- Higher levels of drink driver road crashes

The effect of **extended trading permits** (1-2 hrs) on trends in **violent assault, Perth 1991/92-1996/7** (Chikritzhs & Stockwell 2002)



Research literature on outlet density

- Outlet density associated with
 - Assaults
 - Road crashes and drink-driving (evidence less consistent)
 - Possible other adverse outcomes but evidence v. limited
 - Self-inflicted injury, homicide, child abuse and neglect, alcohol-related morbidity and mortality

Type of alcohol outlet

- Not all outlets are the same
 - Staff skills
 - Overcrowding
 - “Permissiveness”
 - Patrons (e.g. family vs male dominated)
 - Size
 - Food
 - Comfort etc

Responsible service

- Cochrane systematic review concluded that
‘there is no reliable evidence that interventions in the alcohol server setting are effective in reducing injury’
- Need for ‘compliance based’ incentives.
 - enforcement with high probability of detection, ease of prosecution, & meaningful penalty
Ker & Chinnock (2006)

Alcohol promotion

- There are diverse forms of promotion
 - Advertising
 - Point of sale
 - Internet
- Concerns about current control mechanisms
 - No evidence about effectiveness of formal regulation
- Concerns revolve around nature, ubiquity, impact
- Evidence is mounting that it has an impact on intentions to drink and associated with consumption
 - Econometric analyses of aggregated populations have methodological flaw that disallows common conclusion they do not have impact on young people

Harm reduction

- School leavers
- Glass controls
- RBT
- Ignition interlocks
- Thiamine
- Transport/lighting
- Food/water
- Lower alcohol content beverages

Local Governments' role

- Social impacts component of liquor licensing
 - Education of community about rights and roles
 - Ensure LG have stronger role in liquor licensing decisions
 - Ability to monitor outlet density and impact of increases in density
 - Assess impact of later hours on amenity, business and clean up costs and contribute to liquor licensing decisions
 - Pressure on state govt to enforce liquor licensing particularly in high risk venues
 - Contribution to debate about user pays

Local Governments' role

- Consideration of managing night time economy
 - Should not be uniquely based on alcohol
 - Advocate for more rigorous decisions about late licenses
 - Linking decision about hours to public transport availability
 - Liaison with police and security
 - Lighting and dispersal
 - Managing Trouble spots
 - Data

Local Governments' role

- Considering impact of and responding to alcohol promotions
 - On council property
 - Around schools
 - Around other youth oriented venues
- Advocacy
 - For better data to enable local informed decisions (sales and harm); legislation; enforcement; transport etc.
- Managing specific risks for young people
 - Contributing to education resources (e.g. the Gathering)
 - Contributing to building alternative activities
- Managing alcohol events – concerts; party buses;

Just as no single factor contributes to the development of alcohol related problems, no single approach is likely to be sufficient. The evidence suggests the need for combined approaches

Importantly, federal and state government decisions about alcohol have impact on LG – we need to create a stronger role for LG in these decisions and equip them to respond

<http://www.lgadin.gov.au/home/nlgdaac.asp>