

**SUNDAY 14 APRIL 2024**

## **No progress in tackling alcohol harms midway through National Alcohol Strategy**

Successive governments have fallen short in addressing the escalating crisis of alcohol harms in Australia, according to a mid-point review of the National Alcohol Strategy, released today by Alcohol Change Australia.

Despite the Strategy's aim to reduce harmful alcohol use by 10% by 2028, Alcohol Change Australia found there has been little progress towards this goal since the Strategy was introduced in 2019.

The report reveals that alcohol-induced deaths are at their highest rate in a decade, with 1,742 people dying from alcohol use in 2022 alone. Hospitalisations caused by alcohol have also increased over the last decade, with more than 106,000 Australians hospitalised in 2020.

The impact of alcohol extends far beyond people dying and being hospitalised, with alcohol-fuelled incidents affecting millions of Australians annually. Around one in five Australians reported being verbally or physically abused or put in fear due to someone under the influence of alcohol in 2022-23, the equivalent of 4.6 million Australians. There has been little change in these numbers since 2016.

Alcohol Change Australia also found:

- There has been no reduction in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes.
- There has been no decline in per capita alcohol consumption over the last decade.
- Many Australians continue to drink alcohol at risky levels.

Hannah Pierce, Executive Officer of Alcohol Change Australia, said too many Australians continue to die or be harmed from alcohol products and emphasised the urgent need for policy reform.

"We have seen minimal to no change in alcohol use and harms across a range of indicators since the Strategy was introduced in 2019."

"The report serves as a wake-up call, highlighting the urgent need for decisive action to reduce the devastating impact of alcohol on Australian individuals, families and communities."

"We can't keep doing the same thing and expect positive change. Governments must introduce new policies that address harmful alcohol industry practices, and prioritise community health and wellbeing."

Ms Pierce said that although the report highlighted some concerning trends, there is good news in that we know what works to reduce harm from alcohol.

"Australia has always been a leader in prevention and public health. We only need look at the example of our work in tobacco control to see how effectively we can address the devastating impact of harmful industries in Australia. It's time to do the same with alcohol."

"There are proven measures that reduce harms from alcohol products, so we can get to work straight away to create a future where all Australians can live healthier, safer lives."



Alcohol Change Australia is calling on the Australian Government to address alcohol-caused harm by introducing measures, including;

- Protecting the community from alcohol marketing;
- Addressing cheap alcohol that fuels harm;
- Empowering the community by raising awareness of the harms caused by alcohol;
- Supporting alcohol-free pregnancies; and
- Creating healthy public policy free of industry influence.

**About Alcohol Change Australia:**

Alcohol Change Australia is a collaborative alliance comprising diverse health and community organisations from across the nation. Our collective mission is to combat and diminish the impact of alcohol-related harm on individuals, families, and communities throughout Australia