



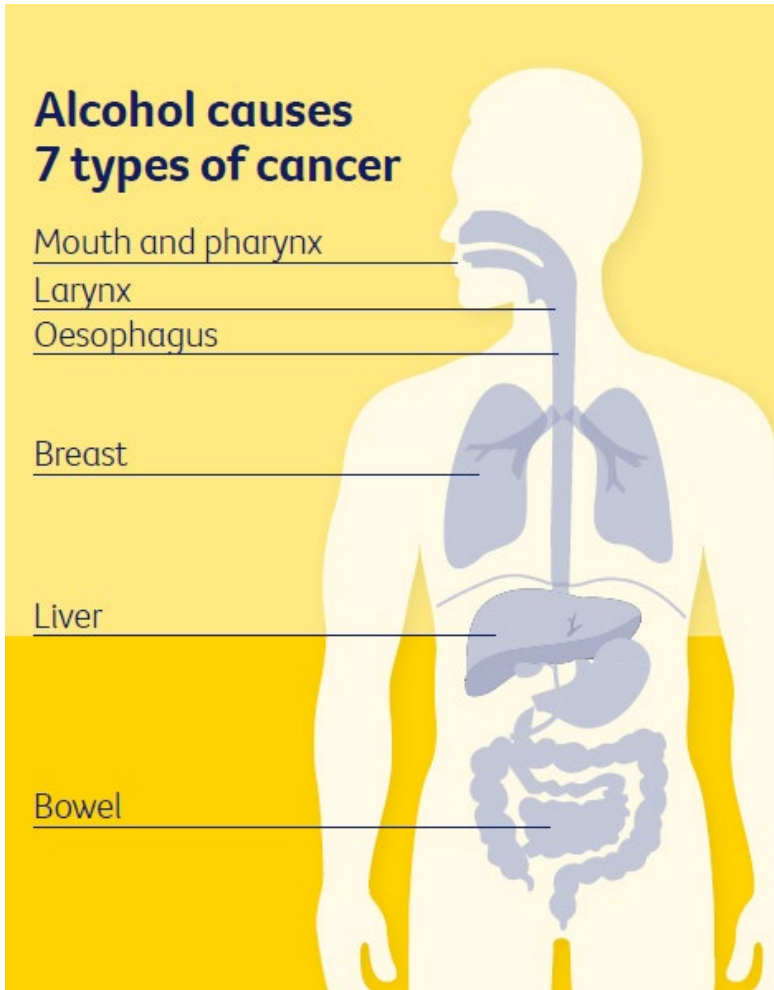
# **Addressing cheap alcohol: the AOD sector's efforts to reduce harm.**

Julia Stafford and Danica Keric  
Alcohol Programs Team



In the spirit of deepening relationships, Cancer Council WA acknowledge all the Traditional Custodians and owners of country throughout Western Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We also pay our respect to their Elders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal peoples living and working in this area.

# Alcohol causes cancer.



Alcohol is a Group 1 Carcinogen.

When it comes to cancer risk, there is no safe level of alcohol use.

Cancer risk increases as alcohol use increases.

Community awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer is low.

Around 4% of all new cancer cases in Australia are due to alcohol.

# Alcohol Prevention Policy

This policy was developed by Cancer Council's expert Nutrition, Alcohol and Physical Activity sub-committee and endorsed by Cancer Council's National Public Health Committee.

This policy has been externally reviewed by Dr Michael Livingston (National Drug Research Institute, Victoria), Kathryn Elliot (the Alcohol Mindset Coach) and Dr Annalee Stearne (National Drug Research Institute, Western Australia)

This section was published in December 2024.

Contact us at [cancercontrolpolicy@cancer.org.au](mailto:cancercontrolpolicy@cancer.org.au).

<https://www.cancer.org.au/about-us/policy-and-advocacy/prevention/alcohol/policy-priorities>

# Key policy priorities.

## Restrict alcohol advertising, promotion and sponsorship

## Reform alcohol pricing policies

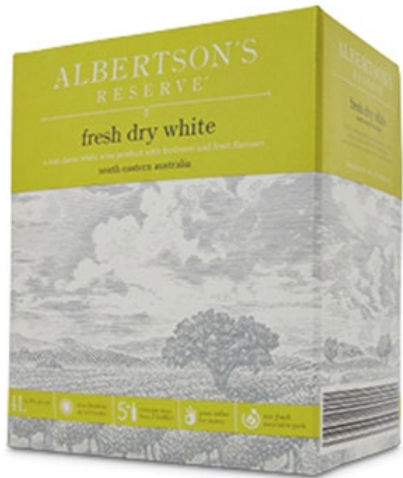
- Reform alcohol taxation so that all alcohol products are taxed based on their alcohol content.
- Introduce a minimum (floor) price for alcohol that sets a price per standard drink below which alcohol cannot be sold, set at a level informed by evidence and regularly indexed.

## Build community understanding of the risks of alcohol use through evidence-informed health warning labels and public education campaigns

## Restrict the physical availability of alcohol through strengthened liquor laws

# Concerns about cheap alcohol.

- Really cheap alcohol products represent only a small proportion of the alcohol products for sale in WA, but account for a large share of the harm.
- Alcohol products at the bottom end of the market are targeted at people who drink at high-risk levels and sold to them in dangerously high volumes.



\$9.99 for 4L of wine  
38 standard drinks  
26c a standard drink



Precious Earth Chardonnay  
750ml

**\$3.49**



\$7.99 for 2L of wine  
20 standard drinks  
40c a standard drink

# What is a minimum unit price? .

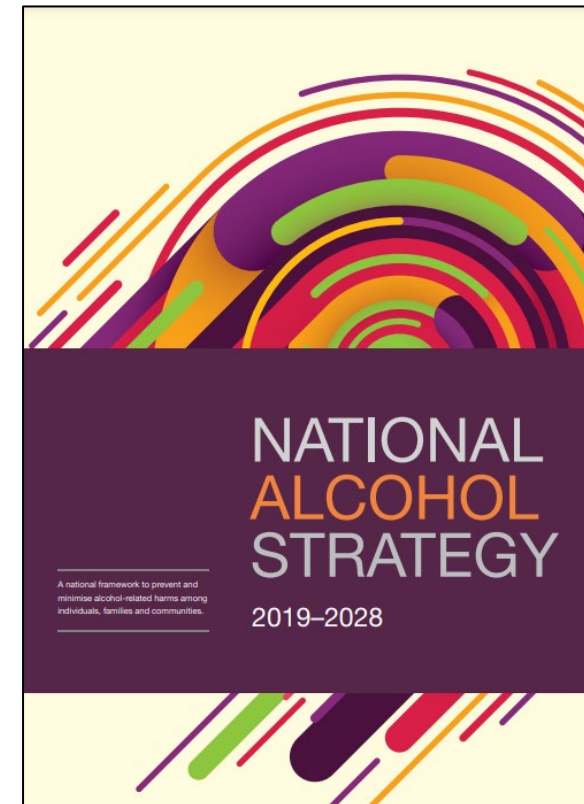
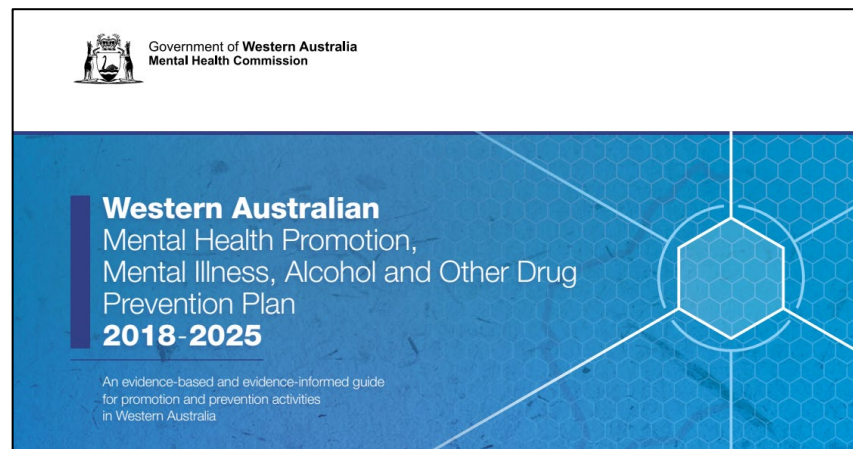
- Sets the lowest price per standard drink an alcoholic product can be sold for.
- Reduces retailers' ability to heavily discount alcohol.
- Raises the prices of the cheapest alcohol products at the bottom end of the market.

# Strengths of a floor price.

- Contribute as part of a comprehensive approach
- Price is one of the most effective levers to reduce harm
- Whole of population approach
- Targeted strategy
- Healthier and safer community for all
- Limited impact on moderate drinkers
- Cost effective to implement
- Reduce health inequalities
- Builds on and adds value to other initiatives



# MUP is well-represented in strategy documents and frameworks.



# Where in the world has an alcohol floor price been adopted?



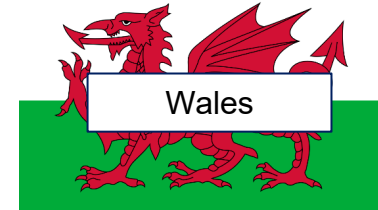
Northern Territory

Implemented \$1.30 per standard drink Oct 2018 to 2025



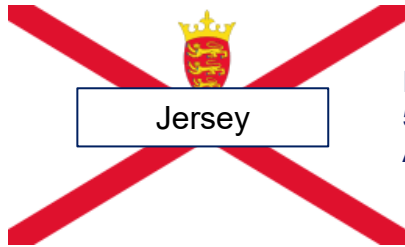
Scotland

Implemented 50p MUP May 2018



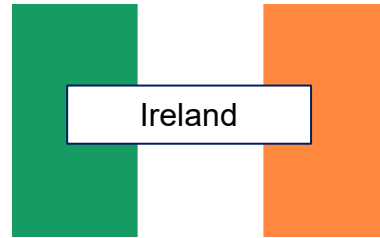
Wales

Implemented 50p per unit March 2020



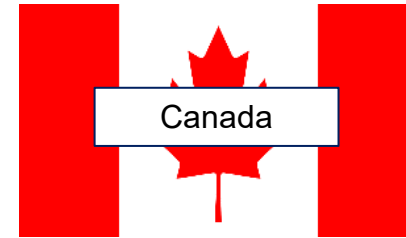
Jersey

Implemented 50p per unit April 2020



Ireland

Implemented €1.00 MUP January 2022

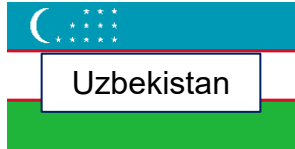


Canada

Has had a version of a floor price since the 1990s



Russia



Uzbekistan



Moldova



Ukraine



Kyrgyzstan

Some Eastern European countries have a floor price



Armenia



Belarus



Kazakhstan

Cask wine sales have fallen since the NT set a floor price on alcohol, which might be linked to harm reduction, researchers say

By Jacqueline Breen  
Posted Wed 29 Apr 2020 at 4:05pm



# Outcomes in the NT

Real-world evidence shows a floor price can save lives, cut crime, and reduce hospital admissions.

In the NT, \$1.30 floor price, as part of a suite of measures, has seen reductions in:

- alcohol sales
- alcohol-related assaults (13% reduction)
- ED presentations (19% reduction)
- ambulance attendances
- hospital admissions
- ICU admissions
- road crash injuries and fatalities
- Sobering Up Shelter admissions (while treatment episodes increased)

Sale of cask wine in Darwin & neighbouring Palmerston almost halved in the first 12 months.  
50.6% reduction in cask wine sales NT-wide.

# Responses to NT Government decision



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Urgent call for NT Government to retain floor price on alcohol to prioritise health and safety of Territorians

Today representatives from community, health, research and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have called on the Northern Territory Government to reconsider their plan to scrap the Minimum Unit Price (floor price) on alcohol.

This call comes amidst [strong community opposition](#) to the Government's proposal to remove evidence-based alcohol harm minimisation measure.

Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) Chief Executive, Dr John Paterson said, "This week the NT Coroner, Elisabeth Armitage handed down her report on the inquest into Aboriginal women killed by domestic violence in the NT.

"The report included two explicit recommendations on alcohol, including for an evidence-based alcohol strategy to reduce alcohol availability to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence.

"We need to be doing everything we can to keep our communities safe, and we know that alcohol exacerbates family and domestic violence. Removing the floor price would lead to more alcohol harms, more crime and more disadvantage.



# Responses to NT Government decision

## What else was said?

Opposition members and crossbenchers spoke up against the decision.

"[The CLP] wants to make it cheaper and easier for people who struggle with alcohol to access the very thing that causes them and their community the most harm."

Selena Uibo, Labor

"If a floor price reduces the harmful effects of alcohol by even a small amount, we will all benefit and there is overwhelming evidence that this policy is working."

Justine Davis, Independent

"Why would we want more access to cheap grog in the NT? This is to benefit the alcohol industry, plain and simple."

Kat McNamara, NT Greens

## Community voices

During the debate an open letter was read out - signed by 230 individuals, health, community, research and Aboriginal-controlled organisations - calling on the NT Government to **engage, listen and consult with them on alcohol policy.**

Open letter: Putting the health, wellbeing and safety of Territorians first

Dear Chief Minister the Hon Lia Finocchiaro,

We are writing to urge you to put the health, wellbeing and safety of Territorians first, by keeping in place measures that work to reduce harms from alcohol.

Alcohol causes a great deal of harm to far too many Territorians. Measures that control the availability and accessibility of alcohol, like the Minimum Unit Price and reduced trading hours for alcohol outlets have proven to reduce harm, which has been proven to save lives.

As leaders of health, community, Aboriginal and research organisations, we see the impact of effective alcohol policies in keeping our communities safe, and we strongly oppose any moves to remove these policies.

If these policies are removed or relaxed, we know we will see increases in violence against women and children, more people hospitalised because of chronic diseases and more deaths.

Please engage with us, listen to us and consult with communities who experience firsthand the impact of alcohol on our families.

We know all too well what happens when decisions are quickly made without community engagement and consideration of the evidence.

Source: <https://fare.org.au/northern-territory-government-scrap-alcohol-floor-price/>

# Achieving its aims in Scotland.

April 2024



## Minimum Unit Pricing

Continuing and optimising a life-saving policy

On 17 April 2024, the Scottish Parliament voted to:

- ✓ Continue MUP beyond the end of April 2024
- ✓ Increase MUP to 65p per unit from 30 September 2024



MUP has achieved its aims of reducing alcohol-related harm



Saved an estimated 156 lives per year (13.6% reduction)



Averted an estimated 411 hospital admissions per year (4.1% reduction)



Reduced inequalities with the most lives saved among the 40% most deprived groups

MUP has achieved these positive health impacts through reduced consumption:



Population consumption reduced by an estimated 3%, driven by a reduction in off-trade alcohol sales



Hazardous and harmful drinking reduced, with people who bought the most alcohol reducing their purchasing the most

*"MUP has contributed to saving lives and slowing the increase in alcohol-specific deaths seen across the UK since the pandemic."*

Dr Tara Shivaji  
Consultant in Public Health Medicine  
Public Health Scotland

- There have been no significant negative impacts on alcohol producers or sellers.
- There is no evidence of widespread social harms, such as increased drug use, illicit alcohol use or impacts on household spending.



MUP was increased to 65p per unit to make good on inflation and proactively react to the public health emergency.

This was supported by more than 80 organisations, including medical bodies, children's charities, and organisations representing people with lived experience of alcohol problems, in Scotland and beyond.

Failure to increase MUP to 65p would have resulted in an estimated 800 more deaths and almost 10,000 additional hospital admissions, at an estimated cost of £11 million to our hospitals and NHS.



### What we need next:

- An automatic uprating mechanism to link MUP to affordability into the future
- An alcohol harm prevention levy on retailers' profits from MUP, to support local action on preventing alcohol harms and improving treatment and recovery support

### MUP alone is not enough

The Scottish Government's alcohol strategy contains 20 actions to reduce alcohol consumption and harm in Scotland, though a number of these have yet to be fully implemented.

The Scottish Government should:

- ✓ Introduce statutory restrictions on alcohol marketing to protect children and young people
- ✓ Restrict the display and promotion of alcohol in shops so it is only visible to those wanting to browse or purchase alcohol
- ✓ Improve controls on where, when, and how alcohol is sold
- ✓ Increase investment in the early identification of those at risk of harm
- ✓ Improve person-centred treatment and recovery support



# Encouraging outcomes in Wales.

- Smooth implementation
- Some very cheap alcohol products no longer available
- Indications overall consumption has declined
- Unintended consequences did not materialise significantly
- Opportunity for additional supports for heavy and dependent drinkers on low incomes
- Effect of 50p per unit minimum price has eroded over time – price needs updating.





# MINIMUM UNIT (FLOOR) PRICE ON ALCOHOL: POLICY PROPOSAL

September 2024

Our organisations and over 30 affiliates stand ready to work with the WA Government to reduce harms in the community caused or exacerbated by alcohol.

Urgent action on alcohol as part of the strategy to prevent family and domestic violence, alongside other harms including alcohol-caused cancer, is needed. There is increased

recognition of the role of alcohol in the gender-based violence crisis with WA Police attending more than 25 alcohol-related family assault incidents each day. Other harms from alcohol are increasing, with alcohol-caused cancer, injuries and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder some of the many issues impacting individuals, families and communities.

The community is calling for change, with 76 per cent of Western Australian adults supportive of the WA Government doing more to reduce these harms.

**We recommend the WA Government be bold and introduce a minimum unit (floor) price for alcohol as soon as possible after the 2025 State Election.**

A minimum unit (floor) price for alcohol is a measure with significant success elsewhere in the world in reducing alcohol harms. A floor price focuses on cheap alcohol, has limited impact on moderate drinkers, and is cost effective to implement. It is a targeted strategy that achieves benefits at the whole of community level. A floor price in WA would be a key part of a suite of measures to build a healthier and safer State. It would build on, add value to, and potentially simplify existing WA Government initiatives to reduce harms from alcohol.

## THE ASK

- That a floor price for alcohol be introduced in WA at \$1.50 per standard drink and regularly adjusted for inflation.
- A whole of State approach be taken to ensure the benefits are delivered across the State everywhere they are needed.
- That a holistic policy approach be taken to complement a floor price with enhanced access to treatment and appropriate community supports where it is needed.
- That a well-designed evaluation program be implemented to monitor community benefits, identify any potential unintended consequences, and help inform other jurisdictions' approaches to reducing harm from alcohol. The Scottish Government's approach is an example of a best-practice and well-designed program of evaluation.
- If a sunset clause is considered appropriate, that a feasible evaluation plan be implemented well before the sunset clause expires.
- The floor price be applied to all retail alcohol sales into WA, including all alcohol delivered into WA to reduce alcohol's contribution to harming families and ensure equity for Western Australian based businesses. The Northern Territory Government's legislation is a good example of how a floor price can apply to alcohol delivered into a jurisdiction.

Our organisations, as trusted voices in the WA community, are keen to work shoulder to shoulder with the WA Government to introduce a floor price using evidence-based, independent research and the voices of respected community leaders.

82%

of WA adults are concerned about alcohol-fuelled violence

69%

are supportive of the WA Government ensuring that alcoholic products are not sold for cheaper prices than bottled water or soft drinks.



Alcohol and Drug Foundation



## STRONG COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

Our research shows that 82 per cent of WA adults are concerned about alcohol-fuelled violence and 69 per cent are supportive of the WA Government ensuring that alcoholic products are not sold for cheaper prices than bottled water or soft drinks. Here is what some Western Australian community members had to say about why they are supportive of a floor price being introduced by the WA Government.<sup>1</sup>

Leading community organisations across the State are concerned about the extent of harm from alcohol and are willing to work alongside us to achieve positive outcomes for the community.

"I believe there are a lot of deaths happening due to alcohol and something needs to be done to help minimise this from occurring."

"It's shocking that a 750ml bottle of wine is cheaper than 500ml of coke at ALDI."

"If it helps reduce alcohol fuelled violence then I'm all for it."

"Alcohol is too cheap and easy for children to obtain. We know alcohol destroys families and lives."

## WHY IT IS NEEDED

Cheap alcohol contributes to harms. Alcohol products are currently sold in WA as low as 35 cents per standard drink, less than \$4 for a bottle of wine, or less than \$10 for four litres of cask wine. Alcohol products at the bottom end of the market tend to target people who drink at high risk levels and sold to them in dangerously high volumes.

WA communities are experiencing significant health crime and violence impacts related to alcohol use. Almost every part of our lives can be affected by alcohol, including our

ability to access urgent medical treatment, the amenity of our communities, safety on our roads and in our homes, and the health and wellbeing of our children. The harms are well-known to frontline police, health, emergency and social services, and to the women and children who experience family violence in which alcohol adds fuel to the fire.

## EXPECTED BENEFITS TO WA COMMUNITIES

The evidence is clear that a floor price for alcohol would save lives, reduce hospital admissions, and cut crime. The Northern Territory, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Jersey have all introduced a minimum unit price and are seeing its benefits, while Canada and some Eastern European countries have been benefiting from a floor price for decades.

In the Northern Territory, by targeting cheap products at the bottom end of the market, the floor price led to significant drops in alcohol-related ambulance callouts, emergency department presentations, assaults, arrests, road crashes and child protection cases with no reported impacts on tourism and other economic factors. In Scotland, the floor price was so successful in reducing alcohol-caused deaths (156 lives saved each year) that in April 2024, the Scottish Parliament with cross-party support voted to continue beyond their sunset clause and increase the floor price to 65p per unit of alcohol.

## HOW IT WORKS

A floor price would:

- Set a price per standard drink of alcohol below which alcoholic products cannot be sold.
- Apply to only the cheapest alcohol products, which account for a small proportion of products for sale in WA (around 8 per cent) but are often the cause of most harm to our communities.
- Have virtually zero effect on moderate drinkers (in the NT, the floor price cost moderate drinkers less than the cost of a cup of coffee (\$3.07) over the course of a year).
- Reduce health inequalities.
- Allow retailers to keep profits from the floor price increases.
- Reap the benefits of a healthier, safer community for all.

156 LIVES SAVED EACH YEAR in Scotland



<sup>1</sup>Pantalo A, Haywood D, Alexander E, Lawrence B, O'Connor M. Western Australian community attitudes towards a minimum unit price for alcohol 2021. WA Cancer Prevention Research Unit (WACPRU), Curtin University, Perth, 2021.



Alcohol and Drug Foundation





# THE ASK

- That a **floor price for alcohol be introduced in WA at \$1.50 per standard drink** and regularly adjusted for inflation.
- A **whole of State** approach be taken to ensure the benefits are delivered across the State everywhere they are needed.
- That a wholistic policy approach be taken to complement a floor price with **enhanced access to treatment and appropriate community supports where it is needed.**
- That a **well-designed evaluation program** be implemented to monitor community benefits, identify any potential unintended consequences, and help inform other jurisdictions' approaches to reducing harm from alcohol. The Scottish Government's approach is an example of a best-practice and well-designed program of evaluation.
- The floor price be applied to all retail alcohol sales into WA, including all **alcohol delivered into WA** to reduce alcohol's contribution to harming families and ensure equity for Western Australian based businesses. The Northern Territory Government's legislation is a good example of how a floor price can apply to alcohol delivered into a jurisdiction.

# Coalition approach in WA.

## Public-facing: Building awareness of harms from alcohol

- Released an alcohol harms report on behalf of around 40 leading organisations.
- Ran two digital-led campaigns to raise awareness of harms.
- Prepared a toolkit for supporting orgs to raise awareness of harms.

## Behind the scenes: Building a coalition of health and community organisations

- Briefing organisations about the floor price & its benefits and building the coalition.
- Briefing Ministers, their advisors and other policymakers.



### ANIMATION VIDEOS

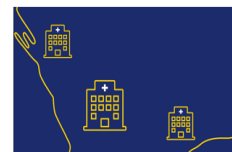
#### 01 ALCOHOL CAUSES CANCER



#### 03 OUR AMBULANCE SERVICE IS OFTEN PUT UNDER PRESSURE



#### 02 OUR HEALTH SYSTEM IS STRETCHED



#### 04 ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM AND VIOLENCE IS ALARMINGLY HIGH



# Community voices.

76%

want the WA Government to do more to reduce the harms from alcoholic products.

63%

believe that the availability of cheap alcohol is harmful to the community.

69%

support the WA Government ensuring that alcoholic products are not sold for cheaper prices than bottled water or soft drinks; only 11% oppose.

63%

support the WA Government introducing measures that target the very cheapest alcohol products that are shown to result in the most harm; only 12% oppose.

*“ My husband can purchase 3 bottles of red wine from ALDI for \$10.00 which he does each afternoon. **The cheaper the alcohol, the more he drinks, the drunker he gets.** I strongly support the introduction of a minimum unit price for alcohol. ”*

*“ If it helps reduce alcohol fuelled violence then I’m all for it. ”*

*“ It’s shocking that a 750ml bottle of wine is cheaper than 600ml of coke at ALDI. ”*

*“ Making alcohol cheap or cheaper than bottled water makes it so easy for young people to get access to it, and to develop a ‘normal’ relation with alcohol. ”*

# Where to from here?

- Continue coalition approach
- Expand representation
- Monitor post-election context
- Share insights to inform our collective strategy
- Address sticking points
- Monitor NT outcomes
- Elevate community voices in alcohol policy advocacy
- Continue to raise awareness of harms caused by alcohol
- Consider opportunities to strengthen policy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms



**Thank you.**

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