

Dangerous Deliveries – Limited Regulation of Alcohol Businesses engaged in Home Deliveries

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There is a strong association between the provision of alcohol people take into their homes and the level of family violence in an area. While the consumption of alcohol does not cause family violence, alcohol acts as a fuel for family violence. The excessive supply of alcohol increases both the likelihood and severity of family violence. The World Health Organization, the Council of Australian Governments and the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence have recognised this association.

We are all made in the image of God, and God desires hope-filled lives for all of us. Our faith reminds us that to love God is also to love others as well as ourselves. In contrast, family violence and its impacts are traumatic and destroys the respectful relationships that should exist between people.

I married an abusive man who had a severe drinking problem. He would take days off of work and drink terribly. When he would drink, he would become particularly abusive.

I became pregnant, and it didn't stop him. He would still knock me down, shake me, and push me into walls.

Testimony by 'Lena' to the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria,
<https://www.dvrcv.org.au/stories/true-stories/stories-women/lenas-story>

Around 80 per cent of all alcohol consumed in Australia comes from bottle shops and places that allow people to take alcohol home. Victoria, along with New South Wales, has the highest level of take-home availability of all states. However, alcohol businesses are not content with that situation and continue to seek to increase their profits at the expense of increased harm in the community. So they are expanding home delivery. Victorian Government regulation has not kept up with the rapid expansion of alcohol home delivery.

Victorian research has shown that take away alcohol businesses are disproportionately located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Further research in Victoria found that disadvantaged areas have twice as many take away alcohol businesses as the wealthiest areas. In rural and regional areas, there are six times as many take away alcohol outlets per person. Rates of alcohol-related harm in Victoria are higher among socio-economically disadvantaged people.

Victorian longitudinal research examined the relationship between the density of alcohol businesses in a neighbourhood and the rates of police reported family violence in Melbourne over ten years. The research found that higher density of alcohol businesses, particularly of take away alcohol businesses, was associated with increased rates of family violence. An increase of 10 per cent in the density of take away alcohol businesses were associated with an approximately 3.3 per cent increase in family violence. Each additional new take away alcohol business per 1,000 residents in a postcode increased the family violence rate by an average of 29 per cent.

Recent research identified patients that presented to emergency departments at three hospitals in Melbourne as a result of harm suffered due to alcohol consumption. Seven in ten had purchased their alcohol from take away alcohol businesses.



There appears to be a loophole in the Victorian laws governing alcohol businesses who deliver alcohol to people's homes. A business may say that the order for alcohol is to a computer in another state. It may then pass that order on to a warehouse in Victoria to deliver the alcohol directly to people's homes. If the business holds a liquor license in another state and the warehouse is only doing home delivery (and does not have its own shopfront to sell to people coming to the warehouse), then it appears the warehouse may not need a liquor license in Victoria. That means an alcohol business may be able to add additional places to dispense alcohol in an area already saturated with outlets. If no liquor license is needed, then the local council and the local community get no ability to object to the new outlet added to their area.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters or e-mails to:

The Hon Marlene Kairouz
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and
Liquor Regulation
Level 26, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

The Hon. Daniel Andrews, MP
The Premier of Victoria
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne Victoria 3002

Salutation: Dear Premier

Salutation: Dear Minister

E-mail: daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

E-mail: marlene.kairouz@parliament.vic.gov.au

Points to make in your letters:

- Express deep concern at the level of alcohol related violence and harm in Victoria.
- Research has clearly shown that increasing saturation of bottle shops and take away alcohol businesses drives up the prevalence and intensity of family violence incidents.
- Ask that they support the introduction of a mechanism by which local governments, in response to community concerns, are able to seek to have the Victorian Government declare an area a protection from alcohol harm area. After such a declaration any additional applications to open bottle shops, pubs or clubs would require the owner to be able to demonstrate they have a very low risk of contributing to additional harm in the area.
- Victorian Governments have already shown they are willing to act on the harm caused by pokie businesses, imposing caps on the number of pokies in areas of high gambling harm. The Victorian Government should do the same with alcohol businesses.
- Also, ask that the Victorian Government legislate to stop the harm increased alcohol home delivery businesses are causing, and not leave it to the alcohol companies to decide what the safeguards around delivery of alcohol will be.
- State that any place that stores alcohol in Victoria for direct distribution to homes should be required to hold a liquor license, as in the case in states like Queensland and NSW. Local governments should have the ability to object to such home delivery businesses where they will add to the cumulative harm in the community.
- Also ask that the Victorian Government enshrine in law and regulation that home deliveries of alcohol must not be left unattended at homes for anyone to collect. They must not be to children or people who are intoxicated.
- Further, home deliveries should only be to the person who placed the order.
- Home deliveries should only be permitted between 9 am and 10 pm.
- There should be a ban on 'buy now, pay later' services for alcohol deliveries to restrict impulse buying.

