

Liquor licensing and community action in regional and remote Australia: a review of recent initiatives

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Abstract

To review the effectiveness of community-based initiatives involving restrictions on alcohol availability in remote and regional locations in Australia, and to assess their implications for other communities or towns contemplating similar measures. **METHODS:** Findings from evaluations of community initiatives in Tennant Creek (NT), Derby (WA), Halls Creek (WA), Elliott (NT) and Curtin Springs (NT) are compared with respect to impact on alcohol consumption, and on indicators of alcohol-related harm relating to public order, health and well-being, and economic activities. The extent of community support for these initiatives is also examined. **RESULTS:** Restrictions were found to have a modest but real impact on alcohol consumption, and a significant impact on indicators of alcohol-related harm, especially violence. Restrictions were also found to have widespread community support, often qualified by a belief that other measures were also required. **CONCLUSIONS:** Restrictions on availability are an effective means of reducing alcohol-related harm at a local level and, depending upon the processes involved in their introduction, are likely to have strong community support, provided that other measures are also pursued. **IMPLICATIONS:** Five issues are identified that are likely to arise in other settings where restrictions are contemplated. These are: the issue of representativeness ('who speaks for the community?'); selection of particular kinds of restrictions on availability; selection of most appropriate additional measures; universal vs. selective restrictions; and the role of liquor licensing authorities in imposing or facilitating restrictions.

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