Predicting alcohol-related harms from licensed outlet density: A feasibility study

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Published
2007
Publisher
National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF)
Type
Report
Issue
28

Abstract

Regulatory control of the physical and economic availability of alcohol has long been used as means for limiting the undesirable consequences of alcohol consumption by responsible governments. Regulation of the sale and supply of alcohol in Australia is the responsibility of state/territory governments. Nonetheless, driven by Commonwealth policy, substantial change is currently occurring on a national scale. National Competition Policy in particular has direct ramifications for how state/territory governments regulate numbers and types of liquor licenses granted within their jurisdictions (outlet density) and has already resulted in considerable change to some liquor acts. Despite this, there is a dearth of knowledge in relation to the likely impact of changes to the regulation of numbers and types of licensed premises on levels of consumption and alcohol-related harms in local areas across Australia.The overall aim of this feasibility study was to progress the development of an Australian model sensitive to local risk factors to help authorities determine appropriate liquor outlet densities for minimising alcohol-related harms within communities. The objectives pursued by the research team were a pointed response to the current information gap in relation to the regulatory practice of controlling outlet density for licensed premises. The project explored how best to apply the wealth of international and Australian research evidence, and systematically

collected information on alcohol consumption and related harms to objectively evaluate (and ultimately predict) the impact of outlet density changes to the public health, safety and amenity of communities.

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