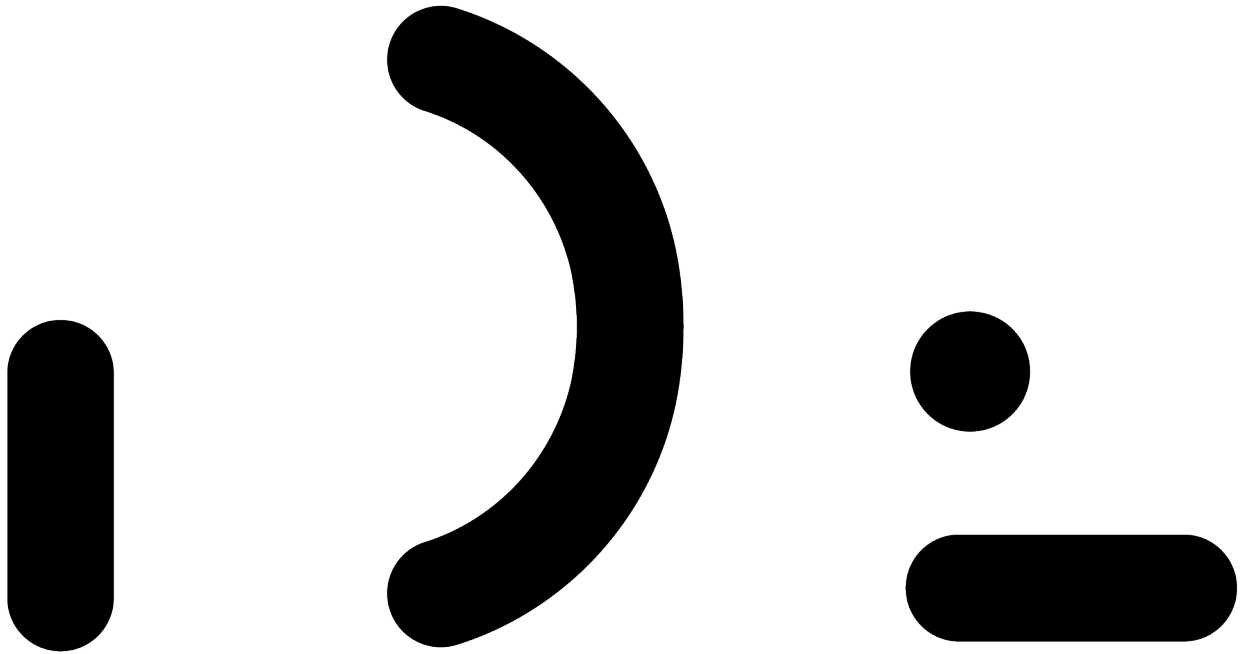




Second National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children

Alcohol and Drug
Foundation

Submission

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About the Alcohol and Drug Foundation

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) is Australia's leading alcohol and other drug (AOD) harm prevention organisation. We work nationally to prevent AOD-related harm through evidence-based policy development, education and community programs. A community-centred approach is at the heart of everything we do.

Executive Summary

Alcohol and other drug (AOD) harms are a significant contributor to violence against women and children, particularly through the role of alcohol. This submission argues that preventing AOD-related harm should be recognised as a core component of Australia's efforts to prevent and reduce violence against women and children.

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation recommends the Second National Action Plan:

- identify alcohol pricing measures as key, evidence-based population-level interventions that prevent and reduce violence against women and children.
- recognise alcohol advertising reform as a priority for Australian governments to support broader efforts to reduce and prevent alcohol-related violence against women and children and recommend development of a nationally consistent regulatory framework for alcohol advertising.
- support nationally consistent regulation of OS&D that, at minimum, includes dedicated licensing requirements for online retailers, restrictions on late-night deliveries, a mandatory 2-hour safety pause, mandatory age and identity verification, responsible service of alcohol training for delivery personnel, and prohibitions on unattended deliveries.
- identify and reinforce commitments from state and territory governments to ensure Liquor Acts include settings on trading hours, outlet density and risk-based licensing systems that support the prevention of violence against women and children.
- support place-based prevention as an important component of Australia's broader violence prevention system and support continued investment in evidence-based community prevention initiatives.
- support the development and delivery of targeted, evidence-based alcohol and other drug prevention campaigns that reduce modifiable risk factors for violence against women and children.
- recognise evidence-based digital prevention and early intervention as an important component of Australia's broader violence prevention system.

Introduction

The ADF welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to the [consultation paper](#) on the *Second National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children*. We commend the Australian Government for its leadership through the National Plan in driving coordinated, evidence-based action across jurisdictions.

As an organisation focused on prevention, this submission primarily addresses opportunities to strengthen prevention and early intervention. The Second National Action Plan should also consider the important role of treatment services, specialist responses, and the alcohol and other drug (AOD), family violence and child and family welfare workforces. Organisations working in these areas are best placed to provide detailed advice on these issues.

ADF is pleased to see that improving understanding about the role of alcohol and other drugs in gender roles is identified as a key opportunity in the consultation plan under Priority Area 2: Prevention and Early Intervention. However, given the proposed focus of the Action Plan is 'Evidence into action', we believe the new Action Plan can, and should, go further by applying what we already know about reducing AOD-related violence against women and children.

We know that harmful alcohol and other drug (AOD) use is associated with increased risk, frequency, and severity of violence against women and children.¹⁻⁴ While all AOD contributes to violence, alcohol is by far the most significant contributor at the population level. Nationally, alcohol is implicated in one third of intimate partner violence incidents and 29% of family violence incidents, while up to 54% of police-reported incidents are classified as alcohol-related^{5, 6}

The relationship between AOD and violence against women and children is complex, multi-directional and intersects with numerous other social challenges and areas of hardship.⁷ But while this relationship is complex, the evidence tells us that a coordinated preventive response to AOD-related violence has many mutual benefits, and there are clear, actionable measures for realising them. This much is recognised in the commitments made in National Cabinet in response to the *Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches* and is supported by the [National Alcohol Strategy](#) and the [National Drug Strategy](#).^{2, 8}

Despite national recognition of the benefits of evidence-based AOD prevention policy and programs on gender-based violence, uptake of the evidence is patchy, slow and uncoordinated. The Second National Action Plan provides an important opportunity for Australian Governments to reinforce and extend these commitments, elevating AOD prevention as a central component of Australia's efforts to prevent violence against women and children.

Accordingly, the ADF recommends that the Second National Action Plan explicitly recognise AOD prevention as an essential component of any effort to prevent violence against women and children and include in the Plan the following evidence-based national goals and actions:

Evidence	Goal	Actions
The more affordable, available and heavily promoted alcohol is, the greater the burden of alcohol-related harm to women and children.	Reduce population level alcohol consumption and risky drinking to achieve meaningful reductions in rates of alcohol-related violence against women and children.	Commit to national action on: - Identify alcohol pricing policies as a key mechanism for reducing violence against women and children. - Recognising alcohol advertising reform, including development of a nationally consistent regulatory framework as a priority for Australian governments to support efforts to prevent violence. - Recognising online sale and delivery of alcohol as a priority area for reform and

		recommendation of minimum regulatory standards across states and territories - Identify and reinforce state and territory commitment to ensure liquor licensing settings support the prevention of violence against women and children.
Preventing and intervening early in harmful AOD use can lower the risk of family violence.	Reduce harmful AOD use among individuals and communities. Reduce AOD-related violence against women and children.	Identify and recommend Australian governments: - Support investment in place-based AOD prevention as an important component of Australia's broader violence prevention system. - Prioritise targeted, integrated AOD and violence prevention campaigns in reducing efforts to reduce violence against women and children. - Recognise the importance of evidence-based digital prevention and early intervention.

Policy-based action to reduce alcohol-related violence

While alcohol is not the underlying cause of violence against women and children, it is a *driver* of violence - increasing risk within individual relationships or families, and influencing rates of violence across communities, geographic regions and the population as a whole.^{4, 9-11}

Alcohol is a legal, regulated product. Evidence-based policy on alcohol price, availability and promotion can reduce alcohol consumption and harm and prevent violence against women and children. Federal, state and territory governments have direct influence over the key drivers of alcohol consumption through policy and regulation, including how cheaply alcohol can be purchased, when and where it is available, how it is advertised and promoted, and how it reaches consumers through emerging sales and delivery models.

Accordingly, comprehensive reform to reduce alcohol's contribution to violence against women and children should address four key policy areas: alcohol pricing, alcohol availability, alcohol advertising and promotion, and online sale and delivery.

Alcohol Pricing

The World Health Organization identifies pricing policies as the most effective and cost-effective measures available to governments to reduce alcohol-related harm.¹² Higher alcohol prices are consistently associated with lower consumption and lower levels of alcohol-related harm, with evidence suggesting that a 1% increase in price reduces overall alcohol consumption by around 0.5%.¹³ Multiple Australian policy reviews, including the Henry Tax Review, the *National Alcohol Strategy 2019–2028* and the *National Drug Strategy 2017–2026*, recommend alcohol tax reform to reduce the harms at the population level, particularly harms associated with very cheap alcohol.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

Pricing policies are particularly effective in preventing violence against women and children because they reduce alcohol consumption across the population while targeting the cheapest, highest-risk products that are more commonly consumed by heavier drinkers and those at greatest risk of alcohol-

related harm.¹⁷ This is important because the risk of domestic, family and sexual violence and child maltreatment increases with more harmful patterns of alcohol consumption.^{3, 4, 18}

The Action Plan should include the following alcohol pricing measures to prevent alcohol-related violence against women and children:

- **Federal pricing policy (Wine Equalisation Tax – WET):** unlike beer and spirits, which are taxed according to their alcohol content, wine is taxed based on the wholesale value under the WET. This creates a market distortion by encouraging the production and sale of inexpensive, high-alcohol products – particularly cask wine – which can be sold for less than 40 cents per standard drink.^{19, 20} As more than 10 reviews have recommended, the WET should be abolished and relevant products moved to the excise system. This would reduce the proliferation of ultra-cheap alcohol products, which are disproportionately consumed by heavier drinkers and contribute disproportionately to alcohol-related harms, including domestic, family and sexual violence and child maltreatment.²¹⁻²⁴
- **State and territory pricing policy (Minimum Unit Pricing – MUP):** MUP establishes a minimum price per standard drink – for example, Wales has a MUP of £0.65 – below which packaged alcohol cannot be sold. Like volumetric taxation, MUP targets the cheapest alcohol products while having little impact on the majority of drinkers, as most alcohol products are already sold above the minimum price.

MUP has been implemented in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, several Canadian provinces and, until 2025, the Northern Territory. Evaluations across these jurisdictions have consistently found reductions in consumption of ultra-cheap alcohol and alcohol-related harm.^{25, 26} In the Northern Territory, MUP reduced cask wine consumption by 51%, with no observed adverse impacts on local businesses or the broader economy.^{27, 28} The evaluation also found a 37% reduction in alcohol-related domestic violence assaults, a 45% reduction in alcohol-related assaults overall and a 64% reduction in protective custody episodes.²⁹

Together, these evidence-based pricing measures would reduce the availability of the products most strongly associated with alcohol-related harm including alcohol-related violence against women and children.

Recommendation: that the Action Plan identify alcohol pricing measures as key, evidence-based population-level measures to prevent and reduce violence against women and children.

Alcohol advertising and promotion

Alcohol advertising and promotion are important commercial drivers of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm. Marketing shapes perceptions of alcohol, influences purchasing and drinking behaviours, and contributes to a cultural environment in which drinking is viewed as normal and desirable. A substantial body of evidence demonstrates that exposure to alcohol advertising is causally associated with earlier alcohol initiation, increased consumption and greater alcohol-related harm.^{30, 31} Advertising also influences children and young people's attitudes towards alcohol, perceptions of acceptable drinking behaviours and intentions to drink.^{32, 33}

Like pricing measures, regulating the promotion and advertising of alcohol is recognised by the World Health Organization as one of the most effective population-level measures for reducing alcohol-related harm.¹⁷

Despite the strength of evidence, Australia's regulation of alcohol advertising across multiple media formats remains fragmented and ineffective. Alcohol advertising has proliferated in new and poorly regulated areas like social media, influencer content, on-demand (streaming) services, and others.^{34, 35} Current regulatory arrangements are ineffective and expose people, including children and young people, to substantial volumes of alcohol advertising.^{36, 37}

Recommendation: that the Action Plan recognise alcohol advertising reform as a priority for Australian governments to support broader efforts to reduce and prevent alcohol-related violence against women and children and recommend development of a nationally consistent regulatory framework for alcohol advertising.

Alcohol Availability

Recognising the role of alcohol in violence against women and children, National Cabinet agreed in 2023 that state and territory governments would review liquor laws as part of the national response to domestic, family and sexual violence. Progress has been limited, with relatively few jurisdictions implementing meaningful reforms to address alcohol's contribution to violence against women and children.

The Second National Action Plan provides an opportunity to reinforce these commitments and promote a more coordinated, nationally consistent approach to regulating alcohol availability – particularly the online sale and delivery of alcohol – in ways that support the prevention of violence against women and children.

Supporting Coordinated Action to Better Regulate Online Sale and Delivery of Alcohol

The emergence of online sale and delivery of alcohol (OS&D) has fundamentally changed alcohol availability and supply. While convenient, OS&D removes many of the practical barriers that have historically limited additional alcohol consumption in the home, particularly late at night. People no longer need to travel to a liquor outlet, stop drinking when alcohol runs out, or avoid driving while intoxicated. Instead, large amounts of alcohol can be delivered into the home, often in under 30 minutes.

Online alcohol sales have increased rapidly over the past decade, growing from approximately \$569 million in 2012 to more than \$2 billion in 2022, and accounted for around 40% of Australia's retail alcohol market.^{38, 39} These figures have likely grown since 2022.

Research examining the relationship between OS&D and domestic, family and sexual violence is still emerging. However, available evidence suggests that OS&D is likely to increase the risk of alcohol-related violence by facilitating increased alcohol consumption and risky drinking in precisely the circumstances where violence against women and children are most likely: in private residences, between people known to one another, and during evenings and weekends.^{40, 41}

Surveys of OS&D users have also found that people commonly use these services to purchase alcohol while intoxicated, extend drinking sessions, and consume more alcohol than they otherwise would have.⁴²⁻⁴⁵ Taken together, these findings suggest OS&D removes important barriers to excessive alcohol consumption and is likely to increase alcohol-related violence within the home.

Recommendation: that the Action Plan support nationally consistent regulation of OS&D that, at minimum, includes dedicated licensing requirements for online retailers, restrictions on late-night deliveries, a mandatory 2-hour safety pause, mandatory age and identity verification, responsible service of alcohol training for delivery personnel, and prohibitions on unattended deliveries.

Other complementary licensing reforms

Alongside pricing, regulating alcohol availability through liquor licensing is a highly effective population-level strategy for reducing alcohol-related harm.^{17, 46}

Conditions governing trading hours, outlet density and licence conditions influence when, where and how alcohol is sold, and can substantially reduce alcohol-related violence, including violence against women and children.⁴⁶ Liquor licensing policy and regulations are the responsibility of state and territory governments, and regulatory approaches vary considerably across jurisdictions.

Reducing extended hours and density to reduce gender-based violence – what the evidence says

- Extending packaged liquor trading hours by one hour (from 10pm to 11pm) resulted in a statistically significant increase in domestic violence assaults between 10pm and 2am across New South Wales – equivalent to an estimated 1,120 additional domestic violence assaults over 38 months.⁴⁷
- Greater alcohol outlet density is associated with higher rates of domestic violence and increased rates of child maltreatment.⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰ One longitudinal study in Melbourne found that each additional alcohol outlet was associated with an increase of 0.8 domestic violence incidents per 1,000 residents.¹¹

Aligning state and territory liquor licensing frameworks with the objectives of the National Plan is a critical opportunity to reduce alcohol's contribution to violence against women and children. Evidence-based licensing systems that prioritise harm prevention should therefore form an integral part of Australia's coordinated violence prevention efforts.

Recommendation: that the Action Plan identify and reinforce commitments from state and territory governments to ensure their Liquor Acts include settings on trading hours, outlet density and risk-based licensing systems that support the prevention of violence against women and children.

AOD prevention programs to reduce AOD-related violence

Population-level alcohol policies are most effective when complemented by evidence-based AOD prevention programs and initiatives that strengthen protective factors, support informed decision-making, and empower communities to develop locally tailored responses to AOD-related harm. Programmatic responses complement policy-level interventions because they can address issues where government has less direct control, such as non-medical and illicit drug use.

Used together, policy and programmatic responses address both the broader policy environment and the local factors that contribute to alcohol and other drug harms.

AOD harm and violence against women and children share many common social and environmental determinants. While harmful AOD use is itself a significant and modifiable risk factor for violence against women and children, many of the broader conditions that contribute to AOD-related harm – including social connection, educational engagement, community participation and others – also influence the likelihood of violence. Addressing the shared determinants of AOD harm and violence against women and children through programmatic responses provides an opportunity to prevent multiple forms of harm.

Place-based prevention

Place-based and community-led prevention programs work by empowering communities to identify local priorities and develop responses that reflect their own strengths, needs and circumstances, strengthening community capacity to prevent and respond to a range of interconnected health and social issues. Evidence shows that prevention is most effective when it is tailored to local contexts, delivered across the life course, and focused on strengthening protective factors such as social connection, education and community engagement.⁵¹

While individual programs tend to have a primary focus (for example, AOD), place-based prevention initiatives tend to deliver broad benefit beyond their primary focus. This is because they respond to the systemic drivers of AOD-related harm rather than responding downstream.

Local Drug Action Teams (LDATS) bring together schools, health services, police, community organisations, local government and other local stakeholders to identify community priorities and

develop evidence-based responses to local AOD issues. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach, LDATs support communities to develop tailored, community-designed responses.

The Good Sports program works with community sporting clubs to strengthen governance, policies and club culture relating to alcohol and other drugs. Clubs are supported to implement practical changes that reduce alcohol-related risks and create safer, more inclusive environments including reducing reliance on alcohol sponsorship, making clubs more family-friendly, and reducing reliance on alcohol sponsorship and sales.

For example, independent evaluations of the ADF's Local Drug Action Team and Good Sports programs (see call-out box above) have demonstrated reductions in risky drinking, drug use, vaping and other AOD-related harms.^{52, 53} However, independent evaluations of these programs have also identified broader community benefits including improved school engagement, reduced youth unemployment, fewer children in contact with police, increased participation of women and children in community sport, and increased access to support services.⁵²⁻⁵⁵

Empowering communities to develop tailored, engaging and evidence-based responses to local health and social issues is an important component of Australia's broader strategy to prevent violence against women and children.

Recommendation: that the Action Plan support in place-based prevention as an important component of Australia's broader violence prevention system and support continued investment in evidence-based community prevention initiatives.

Prevention campaigns

Evidence-based alcohol and other drug (AOD) prevention campaigns work by increasing awareness, promoting informed decision-making and encouraging healthier behaviours, particularly among populations at increased risk of harm. By reducing harmful alcohol and other drug use, these campaigns also reduce an important and modifiable risk factor for violence against women and children.

Prevention campaigns do not only address a person's use, but can also target families, peers and communities as they play a central role in shaping AOD-related attitudes and behaviours (especially for young people). For example, parents and caregivers play a significant role in shaping young people's perceptions of alcohol, norms around alcohol use, and often function as a key means of accessing alcohol. Surveys of young Australians about alcohol routinely show a significant proportion of under 18s report obtaining alcohol from a parent or caregiver.⁵⁶

Case study - 'Keep Their Future Bright' – preventing harmful alcohol use

Research shows that adolescents who consume alcohol are at greater risk of problematic alcohol use later in life, and many adolescents who drink identify their parents as the source of that alcohol.^{56, 57} The ADF developed the *Keep Their Future Bright* campaign to reduce parental supply of alcohol – a key modifiable risk for early alcohol initiation and subsequent alcohol-related harms. The campaign provides parents of children aged 12–17 years with accessible, evidence-based information about the effects of alcohol on the developing brain, mental health and wellbeing, encourages against supplying alcohol, and equips them with practical tools to have informed conversations about alcohol within the family.

Campaigns can also target specific cohorts or demographics at increased risk of alcohol and other drug (AOD) harm. These work by addressing the particular social, cultural and demographic factors that influence AOD use among specific cohorts and encourage healthier behaviours and earlier help-seeking.

People working in trades and technical occupations are one such priority population. They have among the highest rates of risky alcohol consumption and illicit drug use of any occupational group, with around 45% reporting risky drinking and one in four reporting recent illicit drug use.^{58, 59} Similarly, workers

in the hospitality industry experience high rates of workplace sexual harassment as well as elevated rates of alcohol and other drug harms.^{60, 61}

Tailored prevention initiatives that address the unique risks faced by particular workforces – particularly male-dominated professions and those employing large numbers of young people, who are at increased risk of both AOD-related harms and domestic, family and sexual violence – offer an opportunity to reduce AOD-related harms while strengthening broader violence prevention efforts.

Case study – Trade Facts – preventing harmful drug use

Trade Facts is an evidence-based digital resource developed by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to support young people working in trades and technical industries – a group known to experience disproportionately high rates of AOD use and related harms. Co-designed with young apprentices and developed through cross-sector collaboration, the platform provides practical, trusted information about alcohol and other drugs, their effects, associated risks, and pathways to support, helping users make informed decisions and seek help early when needed. *Trade Facts* received over 16,000 unique visits in the 12 months from April 2025.

Recommendation: that the Action Plan support the development and delivery of targeted, evidence-based alcohol and other drug prevention campaigns that reduce modifiable risk factors for violence against women and children.

Early intervention

Early intervention aims to reduce and delay alcohol and other drug (AOD)-related harms by providing timely information, practical tools and appropriate support before use and harms become entrenched. By helping people recognise risk early, make informed decisions and access support before problems escalate, early intervention can reduce the likelihood of more serious harms developing while lessening long-term demand on health, social and justice services.⁶²

Early intervention also contributes to preventing violence against women and children by addressing an important and modifiable risk factor. As part of a comprehensive prevention system, early intervention complements population-level policy measures and community-based prevention initiatives by reducing harmful AOD use before it becomes entrenched.

However, rapid digital transformation is reshaping how people access health information and support. This presents both significant challenges and important opportunities. Digital platforms enable evidence-based information and early intervention to be delivered at scale, providing timely, tailored support that helps people better understand the risks associated with AOD use and make informed decisions. This is particularly important for young people, who increasingly seek health information online but may be less likely to engage with traditional face-to-face services.⁶³

Case study – dib – AI-assisted AOD prevention

The ADF's drug info bot (dib) is a free, AI-powered chatbot and screening tool that provides reliable, evidence-based and non-judgemental information about alcohol and other drugs. Unlike commercial AI models, dib operates within a closed-loop system, drawing exclusively on the ADF's expert-curated content. It also incorporates the clinically validated Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST), enabling users to quickly assess their own AOD use, receive a brief intervention, and connect with support services where needed.

Since launch in January 2025, dib has facilitated more than 21,000 conversations, with 47% of users aged 18–25 years and 67% aged 18–34 years.

At the same time, the growth of social media and artificial intelligence has increased exposure to inaccurate and misleading health information. Research indicates that two-thirds of Australian teenagers obtain health information through social media, with 77% reporting it is difficult to distinguish accurate from inaccurate information.⁶³ Forty-two per cent have tried – or considered trying – a health-

related behaviour after seeing it on social media. These findings highlight the importance of ensuring young people have access to credible, evidence-based digital early intervention tools to support them to reduce AOD-related harm.

Providing accessible, evidence-based and clinically informed digital tools helps people make informed decisions, identify risks, and seek support early, before problematic use becomes entrenched.

Recommendation: that the Action Plan recognise evidence-based digital prevention and early intervention as an important component of Australia's broader violence prevention system.

Prevention requires cross-government policy and coordination

The relationship between alcohol and other drugs (AOD) and violence against women and children is complex, multidirectional and shaped by a range of social, economic and environmental factors. However, this complexity should not be mistaken for intractability. The evidence is clear that harmful AOD use – and particularly alcohol-related harm – is a significant and modifiable contributor to domestic, family and sexual violence and child maltreatment. Preventing AOD-related harm must therefore be recognised as a core component of Australia's broader efforts to end violence against women and children.

The Second National Action Plan is framed around the theme of Evidence to action. While the consultation paper recognises alcohol and other drugs as a contributing factor to violence against women and children, it identifies few evidence-based actions beyond further research and evidence collection. The evidence required to act already exists. Decades of Australian and international research have identified effective policy and programmatic interventions that reduce AOD-related harm and, in doing so, reduce important risk factors for violence against women and children. The Second National Action Plan presents an important opportunity to translate this evidence into meaningful action.

Doing so will require a comprehensive approach that combines evidence-based population-level policy with investment in prevention and early intervention. Governments must address the systemic drivers of alcohol and other drug harm through measures such as pricing, licensing, advertising regulation and controls on alcohol availability, while also supporting communities, families and individuals through place-based prevention, targeted initiatives and accessible early intervention.

Finally, achieving meaningful and sustained reductions in alcohol-related violence against women and children will require strong leadership and coordinated action across all levels of government. Many of the most effective policy levers sit with state and territory governments, while the Australian Government plays a critical role in national leadership, coordination and investment. The Second National Action Plan provides an important opportunity to align these efforts and ensure that preventing alcohol and other drug-related harm becomes an integral part of Australia's response to ending violence against women and children.

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