

National Alcohol Strategy 2018-2026

Preventing injuries and supporting recovery through reducing alcohol related harm

Injury Matters

Injury Matters leads the way in preventing injury and supporting recovery by providing programs and services that enable Western Australians to live long and healthy lives. Priority injuries both unintentional and intentional in Western Australia (WA) include falls, road trauma, suicide and self-harm, poisoning, violence, drowning, and burns.

Injury Matters is a not-for-profit organisation that empowers people, communities, professionals and agencies to modify factors to prevent injury and support recovery. Injury Matters achieves this through three flagship programs: Stay On Your Feet[®], Know Injury, and Road Trauma Support WA.

- The **Stay On Your Feet[®]** program, funded by the WA Department of Health, provides information, education, and support to community members and health professionals to reduce falls and fall-related injuries among older adults living in the community.
- The **Know Injury** program, funded by the WA Department of Health, enhances the capacity of practitioners and organisations to deliver evidence-informed injury prevention activities by providing knowledge, training, resources, and networking opportunities.
- **Road Trauma Support WA**, funded by the Road Safety Commission through the Road Trauma Trust, provides information and free counselling to reduce psychological and social distress for anyone affected by road trauma in Western Australia.

The Strategy

Injury Matters commends the Council of Australian Governments' (CoAG) Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum (MDAF) on the development of the draft National Alcohol Strategy 2018-2026.

Alcohol has a significant impact on the health and safety of Western Australians and alcohol-related harm is an issue across all injury areas. Alcohol is linked to a range of intentional and unintentional injuries, including falls, violence, suicide and self-harm, drownings and transport injuries (1).

Injury Matters supports *The Strategy's* approach to further strengthen partnerships and collaborations between governments, non-government organisations and community groups and effective interventions across varying sectors and portfolios.

Injury Matters recommends the following, to strengthen *The Strategy* and progress towards reducing alcohol related harm in Australia.

Terminology

It is noted in *The Strategy* that the term 'road accidents' is used (page 3, 7,14, 15, 27). As injuries are predictable and preventable, the term 'accident or accidental' should be avoided. Injury Matters recommends the use of the term 'unintentional injury', or 'road crashes' where applicable.

Areas for Action

- Injury Matters commends *The Strategy* for excluding the alcohol industry from inclusion on the Reference Group. However, *The Strategy* does not address other mechanisms in which the alcohol industry influences alcohol policy within Australia. Injury Matters supports the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (NAAA) and Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) in the need to include specific actions within *The Strategy* to address the influence that the alcohol industry has on the policy making process(2).
- While the effects of alcohol on violence, road crashes, and family violence are emphasised within *The Strategy*, alcohol is a direct risk factor in other injury areas. In WA from 2000 to 2008, 30.7% of hospitalisations due to self-harm and suicide were attributed to alcohol (3). *The Strategy* could provide more information within priority 1 that raises awareness of alcohol as a risk factor across other injury areas such as drownings, suicide and self-harm and falls (particularly in older Australians).
- While *The Strategy* appropriately identifies the need for a collaborative approach for reducing alcohol related harm across all levels of government and the non-government sector, specific agencies and departments within Government need to be identified within *The Strategy* to ensure responsibility and accountability for leading actions.
- Improve connections between the community sector and government agencies by providing greater transparency in relation to the implementation and monitoring of priority areas.
- Injury Matters commends the development of a Reference Group and the inclusion of indicators for evaluation and monitoring the success of *The Strategy*, however highlights the need to include a plan for implementation and timeline. For example, *The Strategy* highlights the need to develop alcohol guidelines for older adults in Australia however no detail is included on how this would be implemented or translated to the community.
- *The Strategy* requires inclusion of accountability mechanisms for governments to commit to undertaking meaningful action and to work collaboratively to achieve goals. An evaluation framework including performance indicators should be outlined to measure progress for each priority area and at risk populations.
- Whilst inclusion of the 10% reduction in harmful alcohol consumption target is welcome, Injury Matters concurs with NAAA and FARE's recommendation to align the target with the Australian Health Policy Collaboration Health Tracker 2025 target of a 20% reduction in harmful use of alcohol (4).

Injury across the age span can be predicted and prevented through coordinated evidence-based programs, policies, and services. Ongoing investment in reducing alcohol related harm and as such injury prevention is imperative to improving the lives of Australians and critical for reducing the cost and burden in Australia.

References

1. Xiao J, Rowe T, Somerford P, Draper G, Martin J. Impact of alcohol on the population of Western Australia. Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health WA; 2008.
2. National Alliance for Action on Alcohol, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education. NAAA and FARE response to the "Consultation Draft National Alcohol Strategy 2018-2026": An overview [Internet]. 2018 [cited 2018 Feb 2]. Available from: <http://aadant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/NAAA-and-FARE-response-to-draft-NAS-2018-2026-An-overview-12-Jan-18.pdf>
3. Ballestas T, Xiao J, McEvoy S, Somerford P. The Epidemiology of Injury In Western Australia, 2000 - 2008. Perth: Department of Health WA; 2011.
4. Australian Health Policy Collaboration. Australia's Health Tracker: a report card on preventable chronic diseases, conditions and their risk factors. Tracking progress for a healthier AUstralia by 2025 [Internet]. 2016. Available from: <https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/AHPC/pdfs/australias-health-tracker.pdf>