

30 October 2025

Dr Mike Freeland MP
Chair, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care
and Disability
Parliament of Australia

By email: Health.Reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Freeland,

Our Watch is pleased to make this submission to the current Standing Committee Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Alcohol and Other Drugs in Australia.

As you may be aware, Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. All Australian governments are members of Our Watch, including the Commonwealth. We undertake a broad range of primary prevention work, including under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*.

Our interest in this Inquiry relates to the role that alcohol plays in contributing to and exacerbating men's violence against women, which has significant health impacts for women and their children.

Our Watch aims to support nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours, attitudes, institutions, systems and social structures that drive violence against women. Guided by our national evidenced-based frameworks, *Change the story* (2nd ed 2021)ⁱ, *Changing the picture* (2018)ⁱⁱ and *Changing the landscape* (2022)ⁱⁱⁱ, we work with governments, practitioners, and the community, at all levels of Australian society, to address these drivers of violence in all settings where people live, learn, work, and socialise.

We have recently developed a Policy Brief, *Opportunities to address alcohol policy as part of a holistic approach to preventing violence against women*, which is attached as part of this submission. The brief was developed in consultation with the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE). The Brief outlines the evidence on this issue and recommends a range of policy reforms and other strategies to address the role that men's use of alcohol plays in contributing to and exacerbating violence against women.

Noting that the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry include an interest in the *prevention* of alcohol-related social harms (TOR item b), Our Watch recommends that the Committee consider the opportunities described in the attached Policy Brief, which specifically takes a primary prevention approach. These include:

- Amending the relevant objects clause in each State and Territory Liquor Act to make harm minimisation the primary and overriding objective of the legislation, and explicitly include domestic, family, sexual and gender-based violence within the definition of alcohol related harm.
- Strengthening legal, policy and regulatory approaches to alcohol advertising, marketing, sale and delivery, with the specific intention to:
 - address the role of alcohol in domestic, family, sexual and gender-based violence; and
 - change harmful social norms relating to violence, alcohol, masculinity and male-dominated social and organisational contexts.

This could include for example, limiting the availability and promotion of alcohol by reducing outlet density, reducing trading and delivery hours and increasing restrictions on advertising and marketing, particularly to reduce the association between alcohol and masculinity.

Evaluating legal, policy and regulatory changes to understand the impact on violence against women and provide evidence about the contribution that specific kinds of alcohol regulation can make to reducing violence against women. It would also be useful to publish any evaluations to enable each jurisdiction to learn from others about what measures are most effective.

- Implementing a range of interventions to challenge men's drinking cultures that celebrate aggression and disrespect towards women as expressions of masculinity. For example, these could include:
 - cultural change initiatives led by organisations, workplaces, sporting clubs and licensed venues
 - community-based engagement initiatives that work directly with men as individuals and groups in different communities and settings
 - behaviour change campaigns and communications and marketing initiatives
 - improvements to the regulation of alcohol advertising that aim to reduce the association between alcohol and masculinity.
- Addressing the underlying causes of alcohol harms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by tackling the traumatic and intergenerational and ongoing impacts of colonisation.
- Supporting self-determined initiatives related to the supply of alcohol in (geographically based) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Such initiatives may be appropriate only where they are community initiated, owned and led.

- Building partnerships between:
 - Organisations and practitioners specifically working on preventing violence against women
 - Organisations and practitioners focused on alcohol harm minimisation, including for example FARE.
 - Researchers working to build the evidence base on gender-informed interventions to reduce the harms to women and children associated with men's drinking
 - Communities affected by alcohol-related harms.

Our Watch also draws the Committee's attention to work currently underway by FARE which has been commissioned by the Commonwealth Government to review and update the *National Framework for Action to Prevent Alcohol-Related Family Violence*. Our Watch is contributing to this work as a member of the Advisory Group. The updated framework will provide an additional opportunity to address and ultimately prevent the significant health impacts of alcohol in Australia, particularly those that result from men's violence against women and children.

Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide further advice or assistance in relation to the issues outlined in this submission. Please contact me at amanda.alford@ourwatch.org.au

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Alford

Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence

Our Watch

i Our Watch. (2021). Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.

ii Our Watch (2018). Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.

iii Our Watch, & Women with Disabilities Victoria. (2022). Changing the landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.