

An extra \$15 million in alcohol sales flowing into Victorian homes each week

New data raises concerns about alcohol-fuelled harm in Victorian homes

8 July 2021

A new report by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) shows that alcohol retail sales in Victoria remain significantly above pre-pandemic levels more than one year after COVID-19 was first recorded in Australia.

Alcohol retailer turnover in Victoria increased by \$800 million, from \$2.6 billion in 2019 to \$3.4 billion in 2020. This saw on average an additional \$15 million of alcohol flow into Victorian homes every week in 2020.

These increases have continued in 2021, with sales into homes in quarter one 2021 \$187 million higher than the same period pre-pandemic in 2019.

In May, more than \$246 million of alcohol flowed into Victorian homes, an increase of \$53 million (27 per cent) compared to May 2019.

Caterina Giorgi, CEO of FARE, today said that the data raises serious concerns about the role alcohol retailers are playing in aggressively marketing the delivery of alcoholic products to Australians during a time of heightened anxiety during the pandemic.

"We know the pandemic has resulted in more alcoholic products being pushed into homes than ever before," Ms Giorgi said.

"We're seeing alcohol companies use the pandemic to market and deliver alcoholic products in a largely unchecked environment."

"In the past few weeks, we've again seen companies aggressively marketing the delivery of alcoholic products as a way to cope with increased COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown measures."

"Companies should not be able to use a global health crisis as an opportunity to sell more alcoholic products to the detriment of the health of Australians."

"It's clear that we still don't have the right checks and balances in place for online alcohol delivery, which is putting families and communities at risk of harm."

FARE is advocating for common-sense measures to protect the health and wellbeing of our families and communities including:

- Introducing a delay of two hours between order and delivery to stop the rapid supply of alcoholic products to people who may be intoxicated or managing alcohol dependence.
- Limiting alcohol deliveries to between 10 am and 10 pm to reduce the risks of family violence and suicide which increase late at night in the home.
- Requiring online age verification through digital ID checks, to ensure alcohol is not sold to children.

“The Victorian Government has an opportunity to make changes that can make a difference to people who are negatively impacted by alcohol every day when it considers changes to the Liquor Control Reform Act in August,” Ms Giorgi said.

Background

- Alcohol retailer turnover covers alcohol sales from stand-alone liquor retailers for either takeaway or delivery. It does not include sales for on-premise consumption and any takeaway or delivery sales from licensed venues that are predominantly on-premise venues, such as pubs, clubs, and bars.
- In January 2020, FARE’s Annual Alcohol Poll found that 73 per cent of Australians drink most frequently at home compared to other locations. Previous analysis of alcohol sales data indicates 80 per cent of all alcohol sold in Australia is takeaway alcohol, not alcohol sold on premise.
- Alcohol retailer turnover in Victoria remains significantly above pre-pandemic levels more than one year on since COVID-19 emerged in Australia – increasing to \$3.4 billion in 2020, up 33.3 per cent from the \$2.6 billion turnover in 2019.
- Alcohol retailer turnover in Victoria in May 2021 increased by \$53 million (27 per cent) from May 2019, the last comparable month prior to the pandemic.
- Alcohol retailer turnover was \$624 million in Q1 of 2019, \$713.9 million in Q1 of 2020 and \$810.9 million in Q1 of 2021 – showing an increase of \$187 million between the first quarters of 2019 and 2021.

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* FARE reviewed Victorian Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from 2016 to 2021 to examine the changes in turnover for Victorian alcohol retailers before and during the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic.

The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is a not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We do this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion campaigns.

FARE has been working with communities across the country to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians for 20 years.