

For immediate release

14 October 2020

It's not OK to sell alcohol to children online

There are gaping holes in our laws for online alcohol sales, including no requirement for underage ID checks or for preventing delivery to people who are intoxicated.

CEO of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Caterina Giorgi says, "Every company selling alcohol should be required to check proof of age because no-one should be able to sell and deliver alcohol to children".

"We need to close the loopholes so that online alcohol companies uphold community standards like checking ID and ensuring they aren't selling alcohol to people who are intoxicated," Ms Giorgi said.

There is strong community support for introducing common-sense measures to protect children and young people under 18; the majority of people in NSW (87 per cent) think age should be verified to purchase alcohol online.

"Any emergency room doctor or nurse will tell you, pushing alcohol onto children or people who are already intoxicated is not just irresponsible, it can be harmful or deadly," said Dr Trevor Chan, NSW Faculty Chair of the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine.

"Right now the NSW Parliament has the opportunity to ensure that we are doing all we can to keep families and communities safe by introducing common-sense measures on online alcohol delivery," Dr Chan said.

The NSW Parliament is considering legislation on online alcohol deliveries, and community and health organisations are advocating common-sense measures, including requiring age verification when alcohol is sold online, and preventing alcohol being delivered into the home within two hours of purchase and late at night.

- Reintroduce the requirement to verify age at point of sale to prevent alcohol being sold to children and extend it to all alcohol deliveries, not just same-day delivery. Risks of alcohol supply to children and young people under 18 exist for all deliveries, regardless of how long they take to arrive.
- Extend the offence to supply alcohol to a person who is intoxicated to all deliveries, not just same-day delivery. Alcohol supply to people who are intoxicated should always be an offence.
- Amend the cut-off times for alcohol delivery, so that latest delivery is 9pm instead of midnight, and earliest delivery is midday instead of 5am. This is due to the known risk of greater alcohol harms in the home late at night, such as suicide and family violence.

- Introduce a delay of two hours between order and delivery. Evidence shows delivery within two hours is associated with risky alcohol use. A delivery delay will reduce the risk of alcohol supply to people who are intoxicated, which in turn will increase personal safety for delivery agents.

FARE's Annual Alcohol Poll found online alcohol retailers were not routinely checking ID, with only 38 per cent of people having their ID checked on delivery and 25 per cent finding alcohol left unattended.

The poll also found that of people who use rapid delivery, the majority (70 per cent) drank at a risky level (five or more standard drinks) on the day of delivery, including more than a third (38 per cent) who drank at a very high-risk level (11 or more standard drinks).

CEO of Women's Safety NSW Hayley Foster says there is great concern across the family violence services sector following a rise in family and intimate partner violence.

"We've reached out to specialists providing frontline services across NSW and 73 per cent have reported an increase in family violence incidents triggered by drug and alcohol use, and 90 per cent of them believe better regulation of late night alcohol delivery is needed," Ms Foster said.

"We will all continue our work to advocate for these evidence-based policy measures to keep families and communities safe and prevent alcohol-fuelled harm," said Kathryn Wright, National General Manager of Alcohol and Other Drugs Services at The Salvation Army.

Media contact: FARE Media Manager Clare Ross 0429 291120