

Alcohol apps aimed at young

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Apps with names like 'Let's get Wasted!' and 'Drink Thin' have led a James Cook University Professor to call for Government action on alcohol advertising on mobile devices.

JCU's Professor Lynne Eagle led a team studying free apps involving alcohol use and found nearly 80 percent promote [heavy drinking](#).

Professor Eagle, whose research specialties include marketing communication effectiveness and the impact of persuasive communication on children, said there are no age restrictions on any of the apps.

She said many of the apps are clearly aimed at young people and likely to work well.

"Presenting smoking and drinking in an entertainment context encourages [young people](#) to start smoking and drinking. There is plenty of material showing that what they are doing is effective."

The study found that sophisticated advertising strategies are used by more than a third of the pro-alcohol apps, which are generally more carefully designed than anti-alcohol and pro-moderation apps.

Professor Eagle also said apps like 'Drink Thin'—which promotes an alcohol-only diet—and 'Drunk College Sorority Girls & Frat Boy Party Edition' blatantly encourage unhealthy, unsafe or violent behavior in concert with drinking.

The paper estimated some \$100 million of alcohol tax revenue in 2010 came from underage drinkers.

Professor Eagle said self-regulation was failing and the Government had to step in and insist on effective measures.

"If the industry can't effectively regulate itself then it allows the cowboys to develop and use these apps. You don't want to have to wait for a generation of teens to start showing signs of problem drinking before you act."

More information: Alcohol promotion via mobile phone apps: gaps in impact evaluation and regulatory coverage, ANZMAC 2014 Program, 1st December – 3rd December 2014.

Provided by James Cook University

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