

Alcohol industry resists prioritising health over profits, research finds

August 14 2018, by Lauren Sydoruk



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The Australian alcohol industry fails to acknowledge the substantial burden of disease caused by their products and resists calls for stronger regulation to reduce harm, new research led by Curtin University has

found.

The research, published in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*, analysed editorial and advertorial content from a leading alcohol trade magazine to provide insight into how the [alcohol industry](#) acts. It found that the alcohol industry and its products were being positioned as legitimate, benign, and important elements of Australian life.

Co-author Ms Julia Stafford, from the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth based at Curtin University, said the research reviewed 362 articles published in Australian alcohol trade magazine *National Liquor News*.

"Our study aimed to assess the strategies used by the industry to provide insights for policy makers and advocacy groups," Ms Stafford said.

"The three themes identified were the legitimisation of alcohol as an important social and economic product, the portrayal of the industry as trustworthy and benign, and the strategic embedding of alcohol in everyday life.

"Given the extent of alcohol-related harm in Australia, the public health community calls for more effective regulation of how alcohol is supplied, priced and promoted. Our research shows efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm face strong resistance from the alcohol industry."

Co-author John Curtin Distinguished Professor Simone Pettigrew, from Curtin's School of Psychology, said the results illustrate a general failure by the industry to appreciate and acknowledge the substantial burden of disease caused by their products.

"We found that the majority of the articles examined failed to acknowledge the [public health](#) risks caused by alcohol use and instead

focused on legitimising alcohol and the companies responsible for its production, distribution and promotion," Professor Pettigrew said.

"Alcohol policy options with a strong evidence base include minimum pricing and volumetric taxation of alcohol, mandatory advertising regulations, and effective alcohol warning labels.

"Our research indicates that the alcohol industry would see these population-wide policies as unreasonable incursions on their rights. The study also indicates the level of denial about the industry's contribution to alcohol-related harm and resistance to increased regulation and provides support for the argument that the vested interests of alcohol industry members prevent them from being appropriate participants in the policy development process."

More information: Simone Pettigrew et al. Behind Closed Doors: The Priorities of the Alcohol Industry as Communicated in a Trade Magazine, *Frontiers in Public Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2018.00217](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2018.00217)

Provided by Curtin University

Citation: Alcohol industry resists prioritising health over profits, research finds (2018, August 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-08-alcohol-industry-resists-prioritising-health.html>

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