

Challenges and Options in Regulating the Digital Marketing of Alcohol in the Interest of Public Health and Welfare.

ROBIN ROOM¹, DAN ANDERSON-LUXFORD¹, THOMAS NORMAN¹

¹ *Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University*

Presenter's email: R.Room@latrobe.edu.au

Issues: Australian limitation and regulation of alcohol beverage marketing is relatively ineffective in serving the interest of public health and welfare. The growth of web-based media since 2000 has made the regulatory task more difficult. The paper considers the challenges, options and evidence concerning limiting and regulating digital marketing of alcohol.

Approach: Drawing on research, case studies and reports, the paper considers options in regulating digital alcohol marketing, and lessons from experience with this in Australia and like societies.

Key findings: While almost two-thirds of countries (101/156) in a WHO survey report some restrictions on alcohol marketing, the restrictions have limited effectiveness, and not usually applicable to social media or the web. Transnational alcohol companies are active in these media, and governments have difficulty in controlling offshore-based media. Uniquely, Finland banned some forms of alcohol marketing on social media, but a controlled study found only limited effects. Bans on advertising are generally more effective than limits on the timing or content of advertising, but those which apply only to particular media mainly shift where the promotional budget is spent. Removing corporation tax deductibility for marketing, or taxing the advertising to fund hard-hitting counteradvertising, would be more generally effective. Though these have often been discussed as public health measures, they have only infrequently been applied.

Discussion and conclusions: Effective Australian controls of alcohol marketing on digital media would require backing by intergovernmental agreements. Pending such agreements, limiting deductibility of promotional costs would effectively serve public health interests.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *This project was supported by core funding for the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research from the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, a not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms.*