

Unclassified

NSW POLICE FORCE
2014-2018

ALCOHOL STRATEGY



NSW Police Force

Unclassified

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COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the *2014 – 2018 Alcohol Strategy* which sets out how the NSW Police Force will work together with other agencies and the community to reduce alcohol-related harm in NSW.

The Auditor-General found that in 2013 alcohol misuse continued to be a significant burden on society and government requiring agencies, *particularly* the NSW Police Force, to allocate substantial time and resources to preventing and responding to the problem. While most people consume alcohol responsibly, the social, physical and economic consequences which result from the misuse of alcohol by the minority are unacceptably high and, *importantly*, preventable.

I have heard, and share, the concerns being voiced by the people of NSW about the destructive impact alcohol has on their local communities resulting in reduced public amenity and fears about personal safety. As the Commissioner of Police I am also concerned by the toll exacted on frontline police as they respond to and protect the community from this type of antisocial behaviour.

The NSW Police Force is responsible for reducing violence, crime, and fear - all of which are exacerbated by excessive alcohol consumption. Reducing the crime and harms that occur as a result of alcohol misuse is therefore a core responsibility of the NSW Police Force and one of its key priorities.

The NSW Police Force has demonstrated its commitment to minimising alcohol-related harm and will continue to do so. With the establishment of a specialised Alcohol Licensing Enforcement Command in 2007 liquor licensing enforcement has been enhanced, frontline police have worked to increase proactive policing activities to prevent and / or minimise the risk of alcohol-related harm and police have worked with government to implement and trial new and innovative strategies such as the sobering up centres. Importantly, we are seeing positive results. After a period of sustained growth, a 25% decrease in alcohol-related assault and a 28% decrease in street offences since 2008, indicates that through our persistent and diligent efforts we may have started to turn the tide.¹

Continued improvements however, will require more than just the efforts of the NSW Police Force. This is not an issue we can arrest our way out of. If we are truly to reduce alcohol-related crime and harm there must be a change in what appears to be a culture of 'drinking to intoxication'. Police must involve themselves in *leading* that change, in taking strong and consistent actions that send a clear message that we won't condone alcohol misuse and in working in partnership to raise awareness so that communities can themselves assume responsibility for rejecting the prevailing culture that tolerates excessive drinking and drunken behaviour.

We have our blue-print for action – our commitment to it will make a difference.



Andrew P Scipione APM
Commissioner of Police

CORPORATE ALCOHOL SPONSOR'S MESSAGE

The efforts of the NSW Police Force in reducing the inappropriate supply of alcohol and responding to alcohol-related incidents are critical to the NSW Government response to alcohol misuse. The challenge ahead will be building on our achievements to date as well as developing our ability to act strategically through collaborative partnerships, embracing long and short-term solutions, and engaging in evidence-based practice.

Police are often the first agency to respond to the impacts of alcohol abuse. How we respond therefore, is important in minimising harm. Alcohol misuse remains a principal problem in today's society and one of the strategies to reduce this problem is through effective and targeted enforcement. Commissioner Scipione consistently reinforces the importance of people taking personal responsibility. Frontline police can support this message by holding intoxicated offenders accountable – personally responsible – for their behaviour, and taking appropriate enforcement action. This is what our communities expect of their Police.

Responding appropriately also means using our powers to protect. Our responsibility for community safety also extends to intoxicated people, who by virtue of their age, gender, homelessness, mental and / or physical health are at increased risk. In responding to these individuals, we need to facilitate access to appropriate support networks.

If we are to sustain long-term reductions in alcohol-related crime and associated harms we need to deal with an offender's underlying alcohol problem. We will continue to work in partnership with health and other agencies to support diversionary programs that seek to treat the offender's alcohol misuse and, in so doing, reduce alcohol-related crime. A particular focus of this strategy will be in directing our efforts towards young people to encourage positive and responsible attitudes towards alcohol consumption.

Through effective partnerships we can build response capacity and ensure collective responsibility for a problem whose solution falls beyond the remit of police. We need to work in partnership with industry, local government, other agencies, local communities, schools and parents to reduce the inappropriate supply of alcohol and ultimately work towards changing the culture of acceptance towards alcohol misuse.

As the Corporate Sponsor for Alcohol I am committed to reducing alcohol-related crime and trauma and to improving public amenity in NSW. To support me in achieving this goal I have established an Alcohol Advisory Group to drive the strategy, monitor performance, and report on progress against the priority areas. I acknowledge the significant achievements we have made to date but urge all police to recognise and accept what is being asked of them by the community and to embrace the challenge.



Superintendent Pat Paroz APM
Corporate Sponsor, Alcohol

THE SITUATION

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug in Australia. While most people drink in a responsible manner, a significant level of preventable alcohol-related harm occurs, not only to individual users, but to their families and the broader community as a consequence of the risky drinking practices of the minority.

The immediate and long-term harms from excessive alcohol consumption include:

- adverse health outcomes such as injury, disease, birth defects, mental illness, and death
- social disruption through breakdown of family and social networks and loss of public amenity and safety
- economic hardship from loss of employment and productivity
- criminality, especially in relation to violent and antisocial behaviour.

In NSW it has been estimated that in 2010 the overall cost of alcohol misuse was \$3.87 billion or \$1565 per household per annum. Almost a third of that cost was expended by government agencies responding to alcohol-related harm, of which the largest proportion was borne by police at \$372 million.²

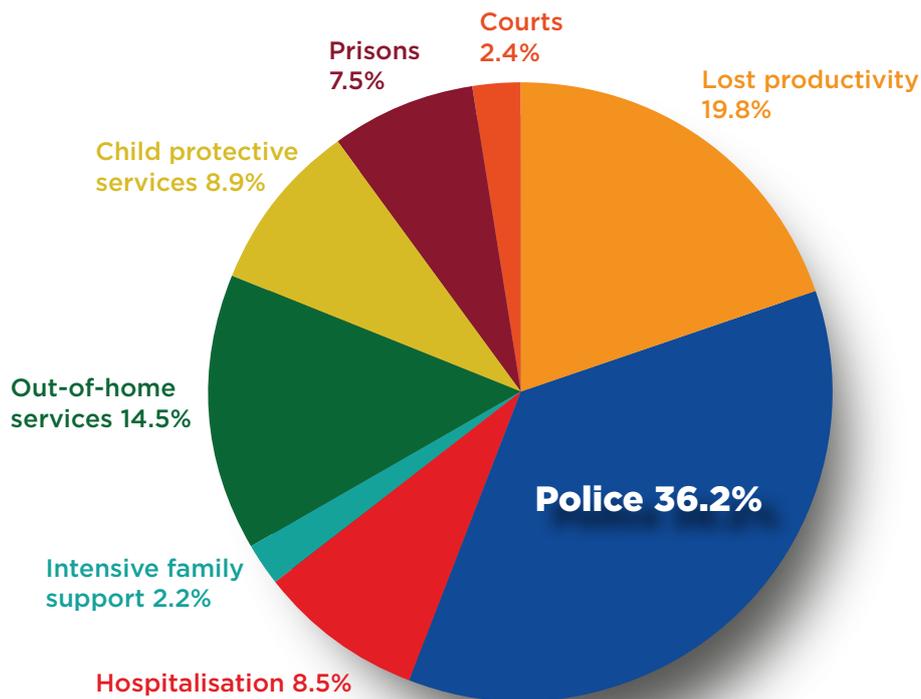


Figure 1: NSW Government response to alcohol abuse – relative cost by activity area³

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR POLICE?

Police resources are directed at proactive activities aimed at preventing or minimising excessive alcohol consumption; responding to the immediate consequences of alcohol misuse such as road accidents and incidents involving violent and antisocial behaviour; or assisting intoxicated people.

While alcohol is implicated in a broad range of criminal activities including homicide and suicide, it is a significant factor in antisocial and violent behaviour. Police figures reveal that in 2013, almost two in five assaults and three in five street offences in NSW were alcohol-related.⁴ Furthermore, alcohol is one of the three primary contributors to road trauma, with crashes involving alcohol being twice as likely to result in a fatality as those involving speed or fatigue.⁵ There is also an increasing number of intoxicated pedestrian deaths.⁶

IN 2013, ALCOHOL WAS A FACTOR IN:

- 32% of sexual assaults
- 36% of domestic assaults
- 40% of non-domestic assaults
- 58% of assaults on police.⁷

IN 2012, ALCOHOL WAS A FACTOR IN:

- 17% of fatal crashes (82% of which occurred in country areas)
- 6% of crashes resulting in an injury.

IN 2013:

- more than 7000 people were dealt with as intoxicated persons
- almost 100 people every day were moved-on for public drunk and disorderly behaviour that was threatening or intimidating.⁹

Police also have a duty of care to those who are vulnerable due to intoxication. Preventative action by police can reduce the likelihood of the person becoming a victim or perpetrator of crime, thereby improving community amenity and safety. While necessary, this too has a significant impact on policing resources.

WHO IN THE COMMUNITY IS MOST AT RISK?

Young people, Aboriginal people and males are disproportionately represented amongst risky drinkers which contributes to their over-representation in alcohol-related crime, morbidity and mortality figures.

YOUNG PEOPLE

While more young people are choosing not to drink, as a group their prevalence of risky drinking remains higher than any other age group. Consequently, alcohol is a contributing factor in the three leading causes of death for young people – unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide. Importantly, there is now a strong body of research suggesting that alcohol can disrupt brain development up to the age of 24, impacting on a young person's ability to reach their full potential as an adult.

- 58% of people aged 18-19 years drink at levels that put them at risk of injury or accident at least once a month, compared to 28% for the general population.¹⁰
- Approximately 37% of drinkers aged 12-19 years report experiencing alcohol-induced memory loss associated with excessive drinking at least once a month, compared to 15% for the general population.¹¹
- 77% of Australian students admit consuming alcohol to get drunk in their lifetime, with 38% of these doing so most, if not every time.¹²
- Students who drink alcohol weekly consume on average 7 standard drinks.¹³
- Presentations to NSW emergency departments for alcohol-related illness and injury have increased significantly over the last 15 years for 16-24 year olds.¹⁴

IN 2013, YOUNG PEOPLE* ACCOUNTED FOR:

- 36% of alcohol-related assaults (non-domestic violence)
- 47% of alcohol-related street offences
- 39% of alcohol-related move-on directions
- 25% of intoxicated person incidents, with a further 12% being minors¹⁵
- 33% of drink driver fatalities despite only representing 15% of licence holders.¹⁶

* (18-24 years old)

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

A lower proportion of Aboriginal people consume alcohol as compared to the general population however, those that do drink, do so at more harmful levels. As a socio-economically disadvantaged community and one that is experiencing lower levels of health and well-being the impact has been profound, contributing to higher rates of hospitalisations and involvement in the criminal justice system. Reducing Aboriginal substance misuse - including alcohol - has been identified as a key strategy in reducing Aboriginal people's contact with, and over-representation in, the criminal justice system.¹⁷

ALTHOUGH ONLY COMPRISING 2.3% OF THE NSW POPULATION, ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE:

- 1.5 times more likely to have consumed alcohol at dangerous levels in the past week¹⁸
- 7 times more likely to die from alcohol-related mental and behavioural disorders, 5 times more likely to die of alcohol poisoning and 6 times more likely to die of liver disease¹⁹
- up to 33 times more likely to be hospitalised for alcohol-related illness or injury, especially for women with assault injuries.²⁰

IN 2013:

- 10% of sexual assault, 13% of street offences, 15% of assault and 20% of domestic violence alcohol-related incidents involved Aboriginal people
- the likelihood of a sexual or domestic violence assault involving an Aboriginal person was up to 2.6 times higher where alcohol was a factor
- 1 in 4 intoxicated persons dealt with by police were Aboriginal people.²¹

MALES

Overall Australian males are up to 2.6 times more likely than females to drink at riskier levels leading to higher rates of alcohol-attributable hospitalisation and death.²² Similarly males are more likely to be involved in alcohol-related assault and street offences.²³



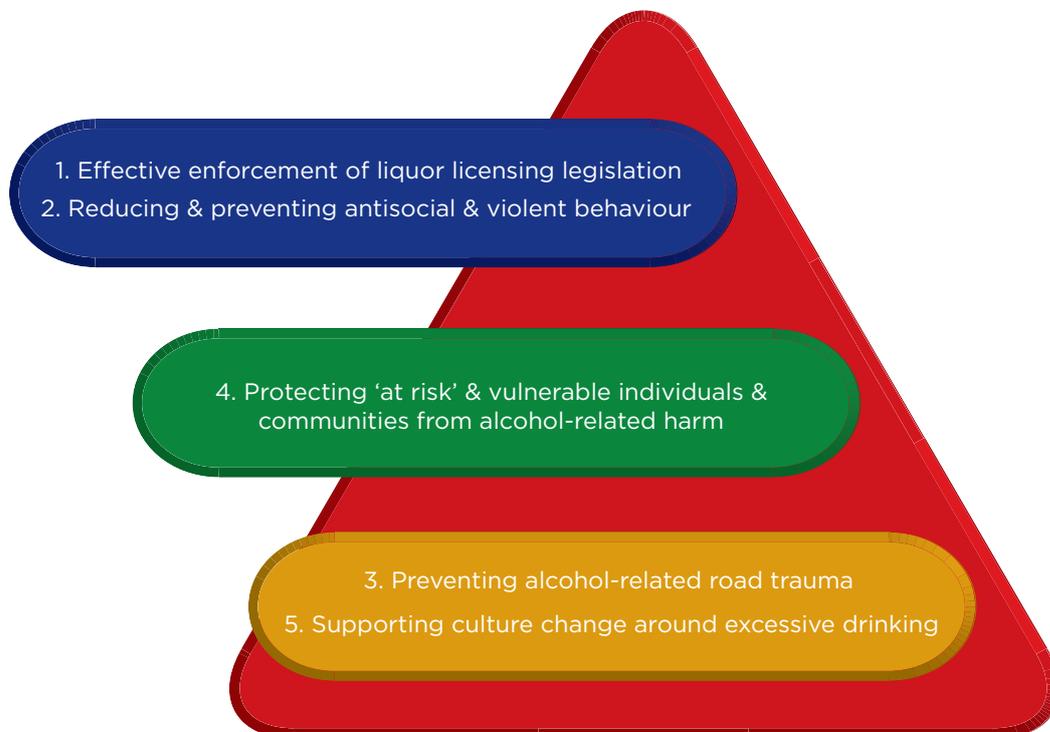
WHAT CAN POLICE DO?

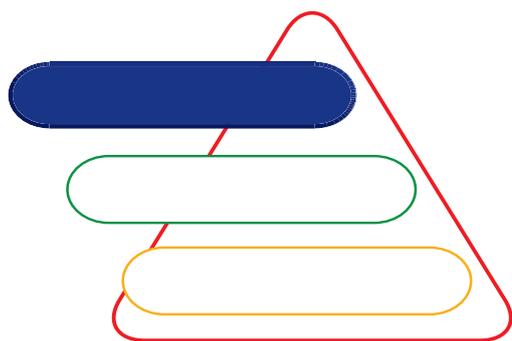
To address alcohol misuse it is important that governments develop strategies to reduce the supply of and demand for alcohol as well as having responses in place to reduce the harm experienced by individuals where alcohol consumption occurs.

Primarily police have a role to play in reducing the availability and accessibility of alcohol, largely through enforcement of liquor licensing. This has been found to have a significant effect on reducing alcohol-related harm. The NSW Police Force have also been a partner in harm reduction efforts, such as the random breath testing program which has been highly successful in reducing road trauma.

However, police also have an important role to play in reducing the demand for alcohol through their participation in diversion programs. Diversion initiatives seek to reduce alcohol-related offending by providing offenders with access to appropriate information and / or treatment as a means of treating the alcohol misuse.

Over the next four years, five priority areas for reducing alcohol-related harm have been identified for police action. Priority areas one and two focus on responding appropriately to offenders and controlling the availability of alcohol. Priority area four focuses on 'at risk' groups with the aim of reducing the potential for alcohol-related harm. Finally, priority areas three and five focus on the broader community seeking to challenge Australian drinking culture and practices.





PRIORITY AREA 1: EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF LIQUOR LICENSING LEGISLATION

Objective: To reduce the inappropriate supply of alcohol.

A strong legal and regulatory framework for controlling, managing and regulating alcohol, where it is actively enforced, is central to any effort to reduce the inappropriate supply and consumption of alcohol. Through a process of periodic

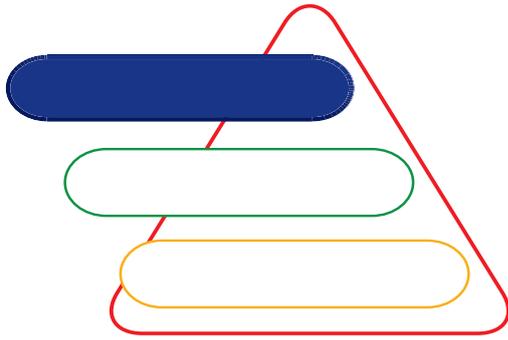
legislative review and policy responses NSW has over recent years progressively strengthened its state liquor legislation. Importantly, with the establishment of the Alcohol Licensing Enforcement Command in support of LAC-based licensing officers, the NSW Police Force has also intensified its enforcement efforts, not only in terms of increased activity, but through a more coordinated, strategic and intelligence driven deployment of resources.

The impact of those changes is clear: after a sustained period of growth there has, since 2008, been a reduction in alcohol-related crime, particularly violence and antisocial behaviour. The effective enforcement of liquor licensing legislation, for which police have primary responsibility, is therefore a key priority in reducing alcohol-related harm.

Challenges over the life of the strategy will be in increasing efforts to limit the inappropriate supply and consumption of alcohol through outlets other than licensed premises. Emerging evidence suggests that off-licensed premises may play a more critical role than previously thought in contributing to domestic violence and underage drinking. For underage students, parents are identified as one of the most common sources of alcohol, as are friends and siblings. On a strategic level, given the strong relationship between outlet density and alcohol-related harm, police need to play a proactive role in providing advice on licence applications, especially in communities where alcohol misuse is an issue.

What NSW Police Force will do:

- improve it's response to development applications seeking to establish new licensed premises
- monitor and review compliance breaches through the effective use of targeted operations, strategic intelligence and partnership
- develop standards to guide submissions for disciplinary action to be taken against licensed premises
- ensure that NSW police are adequately trained, informed and resourced to enforce liquor licensing legislation
- build effective partnerships with key stakeholders including government agencies, local communities, liquor accords and industry to ensure a strengthened, coordinated and consistent approach in regulating and reducing the inappropriate supply of alcohol
- engage in, and advocate for, legislative review to improve and strengthen the regulatory framework surrounding the responsible promotion, sale and supply of alcohol.



PRIORITY AREA 2: PREVENTING AND REDUCING ANTISOCIAL AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

Objective: To improve community safety and public amenity, particularly in the night-time economy.

There is a strong body of research identifying the link between alcohol misuse and antisocial and violent behaviour. The impact of this is significant, with the potential to affect many

people regardless of their age, gender, socio-economic status or whether or not they drink.

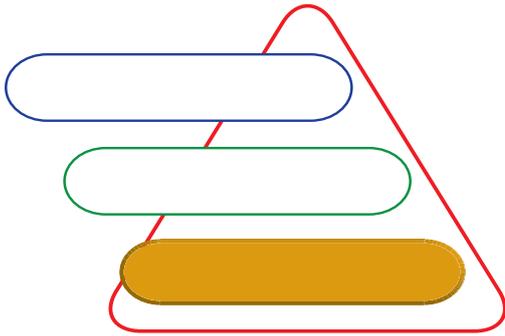
Between 2003-2008, NSW experienced a sustained period of growth in antisocial and violent behaviour, resulting in a 44% increase in the proportion of alcohol-related assaults.²⁴ This mirrored rising concern being voiced by the community about the damaging impact of alcohol on public amenity and personal safety. Since 2008 however, there has been a significant decrease in alcohol-related assault (25%), sexual assault (20%) and street offences (28%)²⁵. Importantly, against an overall upward trend in domestic violence, alcohol-related domestic violence dropped by 14%.²⁶

While liquor legislation and appropriate government responses to alcohol-related crime are critical, there is emerging evidence which suggests the level and extent of antisocial and violent behaviour can also be impacted by identifying the antecedents of offending. It is therefore important to employ a range of strategies including environmental design, prevention, diversion and research in mitigating the emergence, or alternatively, the escalation of risky drinking behaviours.

Aligning with *NSW 2021*, NSW Police Force is committed to preventing and reducing antisocial and violent behaviour through enforcement and effective partnership.

What NSW Police Force will do:

- implement new legislative provisions and policy responses seeking to reduce antisocial and violent behaviour
- work with industry to ensure that the management practices and amenity of licensed premises are conducive to creating a safe environment
- make use of and enforce proactive powers to effectively manage public amenity
- work with local government, agencies and communities to better manage public spaces to prevent and reduce risk through environmental design
- maintain intelligence led high visibility policing (HVP), particularly in and around licensed premises and transport networks
- consider the use of appropriate bail conditions where alcohol is a significant contributing factor in the offence
- increase participation in, and promotion of, appropriate and effective alcohol diversion programs which aim to address the offender's alcohol misuse
- promote and facilitate further research into the relationship between alcohol and violence and antisocial behaviour, including the contribution of other substance misuse and culture
- advocate for access to, and the appropriate use of, alcohol wholesale data
- use innovative technology to monitor alcohol hotspots and enhance deployment.



PRIORITY AREA 3: PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED ROAD TRAUMA

Objective: To reduce the incidence of alcohol-related crashes, fatalities and injuries on NSW roads.

Alcohol is one of the three significant contributors to road trauma in NSW. International and national research provides evidence that targeted interventions together with effective law enforcement are cost-effective, significantly impacting alcohol-

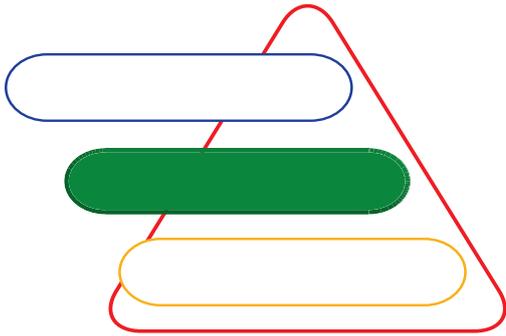
related road trauma. Since 1970, NSW has experienced significant reductions through strategies such as random breath testing (RBT), the enforcement of graduated licensing schemes including limits on blood alcohol content for special driver groups, mass media campaigns and programs targeting drink driving and seatbelt use. The significant cost of road trauma to the community requires a continued commitment and sustained response.

In keeping with the *NSW 2021* goals, targets and priority actions, NSW Police Force, along with other agencies and the community, will focus on reducing the harms from alcohol-related road trauma through the effective deployment of RBT, improved enforcement and campaigns promoting road safety.

What NSW Police Force will do:

- effectively deploy RBT operations to detect and deter impaired drivers, particularly during times of high alcohol consumption and at risk locations
- support campaigns promoting road safety messages and raising awareness of the risks and harms associated with drink driving
- continue to work with the Roads and Maritime Service (RMS) to develop, monitor and evaluate strategies aimed at reducing alcohol-related incidents on NSW roads, particularly in regional and other high risk areas
- continue to work with local agencies, industry and communities to develop strategies seeking to reduce the incidence of alcohol-related crashes, fatalities and injuries involving drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.





PRIORITY AREA 4: PROTECTING 'AT RISK' AND VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES FROM ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

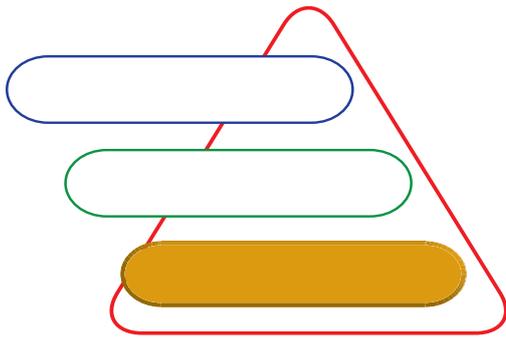
Objective: To minimise the potential long-term and short-term harms associated with alcohol use among those communities disproportionately affected.

There are groups within the community who have a higher probability of engaging in and / or being adversely impacted by excessive alcohol consumption, in particular young people, Aboriginal people and males. The extent to which they and others are impacted by these harms and have contact with law enforcement is also dependent on other factors such as their stage of development, physical and / or mental health, socio-economic disadvantage, cultural influences, and the context and circumstances in which the drinking occurs.

For these highly vulnerable and 'at risk' groups it is important to ensure that there are targeted strategies in place which resonate with them and work to reduce, if not prevent, the development of problematic patterns of drinking and to protect those affected by their actions – themselves, family, friends and the broader community. To achieve this NSW Police Force needs to work in partnership with local communities and other relevant agencies.

What NSW Police Force will do:

- enhance the capacity of those officers within NSW Police Force who interface and liaise with 'at risk' groups to respond appropriately and to assist communities in addressing alcohol misuse
- promote police participation in Community Drug Action Teams (CDATS) seeking to develop local solutions to local alcohol-related problems
- promote safe practices around alcohol consumption through education / information for 'at risk' individuals and communities
- advocate for the development of mass media campaigns aimed at affecting cultural change to be appropriate and inclusive of 'at risk' communities
- advocate for, and trial alcohol diversion programs, targeted at and acceptable to 'at risk' communities
- promote and facilitate NSW Police Force participation in diversion programs for young people
- promote Aboriginal participation in, and enhance police referrals to, alcohol diversionary programs where such opportunities exist
- make use of legislative provisions to prevent and reduce alcohol-related domestic violence
- work with local government, other government agencies, industry and local communities in reducing the inappropriate supply and use of alcohol in 'at risk' communities
- raise awareness, particularly amongst parents/guardians, of the impact of underage drinking and improve understanding of the legislation in relation to secondary supply.



PRIORITY AREA 5: SUPPORTING CULTURE CHANGE AROUND EXCESSIVE DRINKING

Objective: To increase awareness as to the significant harms associated with alcohol misuse.

While the recent decreases in alcohol-related crime are promising, there can be no reduction in policing efforts and commitment until the acceptability of drinking to excess has been successfully challenged and replaced by healthier patterns of alcohol

consumption. More than one in four Australians still drink at least once a month at levels that place them at risk of injury or accident and more people drink at risky levels in 2010 than did so in 2007.²⁷ Therefore, any reductions to date in alcohol-related crime are likely to have been the result of increased legislative controls and sustained enforcement by police.

NSW Police Force has been instrumental in national policing efforts which have sought to raise awareness of the damaging impact of alcohol misuse on individuals and the community through its continued participation in initiatives such as 'Operation Unite'. Police need to continue to work with communities and other agencies in an effort to challenge and undermine the acceptance of drunken behaviour and, through empowering communities to take action, ultimately, to reduce the demand for alcohol.

As members of the community, it is important to make sure that police are not part of the culture of acceptance. To that end, effort will be directed at heightening police awareness and knowledge of the impact of excessive alcohol consumption and the responses available to them. This will ensure that a strong and clear message is sent, that where personal drinking choices impact on the community and the police, it will not be tolerated.

What will NSW Police Force do:

- utilise online media and advertising to raise public awareness about alcohol-related harm and to encourage collective responsibility for acting to reduce the impact of alcohol misuse on the community
- raise police awareness about the harms associated with alcohol misuse
- raise police awareness of the options available to them and the significant impact of their actions in reducing alcohol-related harm
- continue to work in partnership with other policing jurisdictions to advocate for reduced tolerance of the excessive consumption of alcohol
- work in partnership with other agencies to develop and support campaigns promoting safe and responsible alcohol consumption
- work in partnership with local school communities to challenge the drinking culture by raising awareness about the legal, health and social impact of drinking, particularly by minors
- promote accurate reporting of, and any reductions in, alcohol-related crime to local communities through police channels and the local media.

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