

NSW POLICE FORCE

ALCOHOL STRATEGY

2019 - 2026



NSW Police Force

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HELP AND SUPPORT



The Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) provides confidential and anonymous telephone counselling and information for individuals, parents and concerned others.

ADIS can undertake telephone assessments, provide information about the effects of specific drugs and provide advice on various treatment options. They can also help clients contact the best service for their needs.

ADIS is available 24 hours, seven days a week by calling 1800 250 015 (free call).

FOREWORD

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE



M J Fuller APM
Commissioner of Police

I am pleased to introduce the NSW Police Force Alcohol Strategy 2019-2026. The Strategy will direct the NSW Police Force activities in responding to alcohol-related crime and harm to ensure our efforts are coordinated and effective in achieving the best outcomes for the community.

The NSW Police Force is striving to create a community in which the people of NSW feel safe - one in which they feel able to fully participate without fear of harm, intimidation or confrontation. The excessive consumption of alcohol however, poses a risk in meeting this objective. I am therefore committed to continuing to work in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders, including industry, to reduce alcohol-related crime and its impact on the community.

Our efforts to date have already resulted in significant reductions in alcohol-related crime, particularly in the areas of assault, domestic violence and street offences. Partnership, I believe, has been essential and remains the key to our continued progress.

While enforcement activities are central to any effort to reduce alcohol misuse, there needs to be a greater emphasis on prevention and personal responsibility. We need to heighten community awareness about the consequences of harmful alcohol consumption so that we might challenge the existing tolerance of 'excessive drinking' and empower individuals and communities to play their part in reducing alcohol use and harm.

We will continue to build the capability of our police and to work proactively with partner agencies and communities to prevent alcohol misuse, disrupt the inappropriate and unlawful supply of alcohol, and deliver professional and appropriate responses to alcohol-related incidents.

The Strategy builds on our achievements and reaffirms our commitment to creating a safe and secure NSW free from alcohol-related crime and harm.

CORPORATE SPONSOR MESSAGE



M Willing APM
Assistant Commissioner
Commander Central
Metropolitan Region

Despite decreases in alcohol use and the associated reduction in crime and harm, alcohol remains a significant problem in NSW. The harms and cost are extensive, contributing to increased risk of injury, disease, road accidents, street violence, sexual assault, domestic violence and reduced public amenity. Importantly, alcohol misuse continues to impact heavily on police resources.

While our achievements to date have been significant there is still much to do. Maintaining our efforts around the enforcement of liquor legislation; targeting emerging violent premises; and taking a proactive and collaborative approach with industry to improve business practices and to disrupt those business models that facilitate and promote irresponsible consumption of alcohol are paramount to our ongoing response. Moving forward we need to maintain vigilance in protecting vulnerable communities by working with other agencies to influence licensing decisions that negatively impact on those 'at risk'.

The policing response to alcohol-related crime and harm is not limited to our efforts to reduce the inappropriate supply of alcohol. Recognising that there are groups within our community disproportionately impacted by either their own, or someone else's excessive consumption of alcohol, we must enhance our efforts in building strong and resilient individuals and communities.

Young people are highly susceptible and vulnerable to the misuse of alcohol. We need to protect and support them; to provide them with information about the harmful consumption of alcohol; and to target those who make it available to them.

As police, we should embrace strategies that prevent or delay the uptake of alcohol and reduce alcohol consumption. Where possible, we will refer those whose crimes are motivated by their alcohol misuse to appropriate diversion and treatment programs, so they can decrease their alcohol use and consequently, their future involvement in crime.

We must also effectively respond to the harmful impact alcohol has on the broader community. This means maintaining our RBT efforts and responding appropriately to those who present a risk, to themselves or others, because they are alcohol-affected.

To be effective we must be aware of, and agile in our response to shifting markets and business practices. Building the capability and expertise of the NSW Police workforce is a necessary and important part of the Strategy.

We recognise that reducing alcohol misuse and its harm is not the sole responsibility of the NSW Police Force. The extent to which we will be able to minimise the adverse impact of alcohol on the people of NSW is dependent on the commitment, efforts and support of all - industry, government, community and individuals. Partnership is therefore, at the core of the Strategy and the NSW Police Force response.

As the Corporate Sponsor for Alcohol-related Crime I am committed to making a difference. I believe that if we embrace the Strategy we will continue to see reductions in alcohol-related crime and harm and make a significant contribution in delivering on our corporate objective of a 'safe and secure NSW'.

POLICING ALCOHOL-RELATED CRIME

THE VISION

A safe and secure NSW free from alcohol-related crime.

PURPOSE

The NSW Police Force Alcohol Strategy 2019 - 2026 (the Strategy) reaffirms the commitment of the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) to reducing alcohol-related crime and harm. It provides direction and focus for policing responses into the future and will build on the already substantial efforts and responses of the police.

THE APPROACH

In working to reduce crime and recidivism (repeat offending) and to build community safety and confidence, the NSWPF has identified four corporate areas of strategic focus – prevention, disruption, response and capability.

Police recognise the strategic significance of **prevention**-based actions in reducing future alcohol-related harm, including crime and recidivism. Effective prevention activities include building community and individual resilience, and intervening early to divert minor offenders and 'at risk' groups from the criminal justice system.

Disruption of the irresponsible and unlawful supply of alcohol is the core business of the NSWPF. Activities include targeting those business models that facilitate harmful consumption and working collaboratively with industry and partner agencies to promote safer drinking environments.

The police **response** to alcohol-related incidents needs to be appropriate and proportionate. The community expects police to take strong action against those who are promoting or engaging in irresponsible drinking practices which pose a risk to others or themselves. At the same time police are responsible for protecting all people, including those who are alcohol-affected and are at increased risk of harm. The NSWPF powers and the available legislation must continue to be used appropriately to hold individuals to account while also supporting victims and vulnerable people as appropriate.

The extent to which the NSWPF can continue to effectively address alcohol misuse is dependent on the **capability** of its workforce. Critical to the leadership provided by the Strategy, is ensuring police are appropriately trained and have the required skill sets, supported by efficient systems and up-to-date technology to enable NSWPF to implement the Strategy.

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE STRATEGY



PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

The NSWPF is committed to working with government agencies, industry and the community to deliver better outcomes recognising that the misuse of alcohol is everyone's responsibility and that collectively we can achieve more.



HARM MINIMISATION

The NSWPF acknowledges the relevance of the three pillars of harm minimisation – demand, supply and harm reduction – and the important role police play in all three. Harm minimisation will continue to guide and underpin our operational and policy response to alcohol-related crime and harm in line with our commitment to the National Drug Strategy.



FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY

Fundamental to the NSWPF response and the Strategy is the capacity to be flexible and responsive to local needs. One size does not necessarily fit all, and we will work with key stakeholders and communities in finding local solutions to local problems. The NSWPF will monitor changes to the alcohol environment and markets ensuring that as new risks, challenges and evidence emerges, its response is agile, innovative and effective.



EVIDENCE- INFORMED PRACTICE

The NSWPF will continue to base policy and operational decisions on current and reliable evidence wherever possible. Where evidence does not exist, the NSWPF will rely on the best available data and the experience and expertise of its police. We will continue to monitor and review our performance against the Strategy to ensure it is achieving the desired outcomes and, importantly, to inform future policy and practice.

ALCOHOL-RELATED CRIME AND HARM: THE ENVIRONMENT

The consumption of alcohol is a well-embedded and accepted feature of Australian culture, with three in four people (77%) aged 14 years or more reporting having consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months¹. Australia's per capita consumption of alcohol is ranked 10th in the world and highest amongst English speaking countries, ahead of Great Britain (17), Canada (38) and the USA (49) according to a World Health Organisation report².

The majority of those who drink however, do so responsibly and there are indications of positive changes in consumption patterns. Findings from the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)³ indicate that there has been a decline in the prevalence of lifetime risky-drinking, particularly in remote and very remote areas and for Aboriginal people. Further, young people are increasingly abstaining and refraining from single occasion risky drinking. For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury and drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.

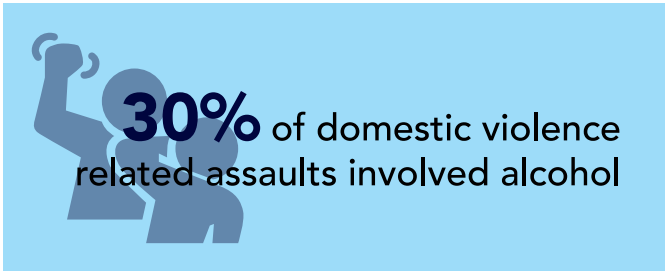
While these trends are encouraging, in NSW many people still engage in risky drinking behaviour. In 2016, of those who reported drinking alcohol within the previous year, 17% reported drinking two or more standard drinks daily exposing themselves to a lifetime risk while almost 25% reported drinking four or more standard drinks at least monthly³. Alcohol misuse has a significant impact with the potential to affect many people regardless of their age, gender, socio-economic status or whether or not they themselves drink. The misuse of alcohol impacts adversely on a broad range of health, social and economic outcomes which also contribute to alcohol misuse, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of increased



32% of adult sexual assaults involved alcohol



31% of non-domestic violence assaults involved alcohol



30% of domestic violence related assaults involved alcohol

* NSWPF data 2017/2018

alcohol consumption and harm, including crime.

The excessive consumption of alcohol is implicated in violent offending including domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide, road trauma, and a range of antisocial behaviours which reduce public amenity and can be confronting and intimidating. According to the NSWPF data the economic burden of alcohol misuse on policing resources is substantial, with 9% of all incidents responded to being alcohol-related. It also adversely impacts police by exposing them to the grief and trauma associated with violent crimes and places police themselves in harm's way. NSWPF data indicated that between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 the NSWPF responded to 235,590 alcohol-related incidents with alcohol a factor in 30% of domestic violence related

ALCOHOL-RELATED CRIME AND HARM: THE ENVIRONMENT

assaults, 31% of non-domestic violence related assaults, 32% of adult sexual assaults and 50% of assaults on police.

The burden on vulnerable communities is also significant. While there are less young people choosing to drink, they are more likely than any other group to drink to become intoxicated. The NDSHS found that in NSW 42% of those aged 18-24 years, particularly males, drank more than 11 standard drinks on a single occasion on at least a monthly basis³. Alcohol misuse increases the likelihood that young people will engage in risky behaviour which exposes them to increased risk of injury and harm, including contact with the criminal justice system as either an offender or victim of crime.

Compared to other Australians, a higher proportion of Aboriginal people abstain from alcohol use. However, amongst those who drink,

a higher proportion drink at risky levels being almost three times as likely to consume more than 11 standard drinks on a single occasion compared to non-Aboriginal people. This increases their vulnerability and exposure to injury, violence and other harms and adversely impacts their likelihood of being involved in the criminal justice system. In NSW, alcohol attributable hospitalisations of Aboriginal people are twice that of other Australians⁴. Further, NSWPF data suggests that 24% of all intoxicated offenders and 20% of intoxicated victims identified as Aboriginal.

In reducing alcohol-related harm in NSW it is therefore important that police not only reduce the inappropriate and unlawful supply of alcohol but find effective ways of responding to vulnerable communities who are disproportionately impacted by the misuse of alcohol; both their own and that of others in the community.



ALCOHOL-RELATED CRIME AND HARM: THE ENVIRONMENT



Police responded to **235,590**
alcohol-related incidents in 2017/2018

* NSWPF data 2017/2018



9%

of all incidents dealt
with by police

* NSWPF data 2017/2018



50%

of all assaults on police

* NSWPF data 2017/2018



40%

of young people have
been in a vehicle with an
alcohol-affected driver

* Lam, T et al Young Australians Alcohol
Reporting System (YAARS) 2017 NDRI



15%

of fatal road crashes

* Transport for NSW Centre for Road
Safety 2018, Road Safety Plan 2021

31%

of all assaults (DV and non-DV)

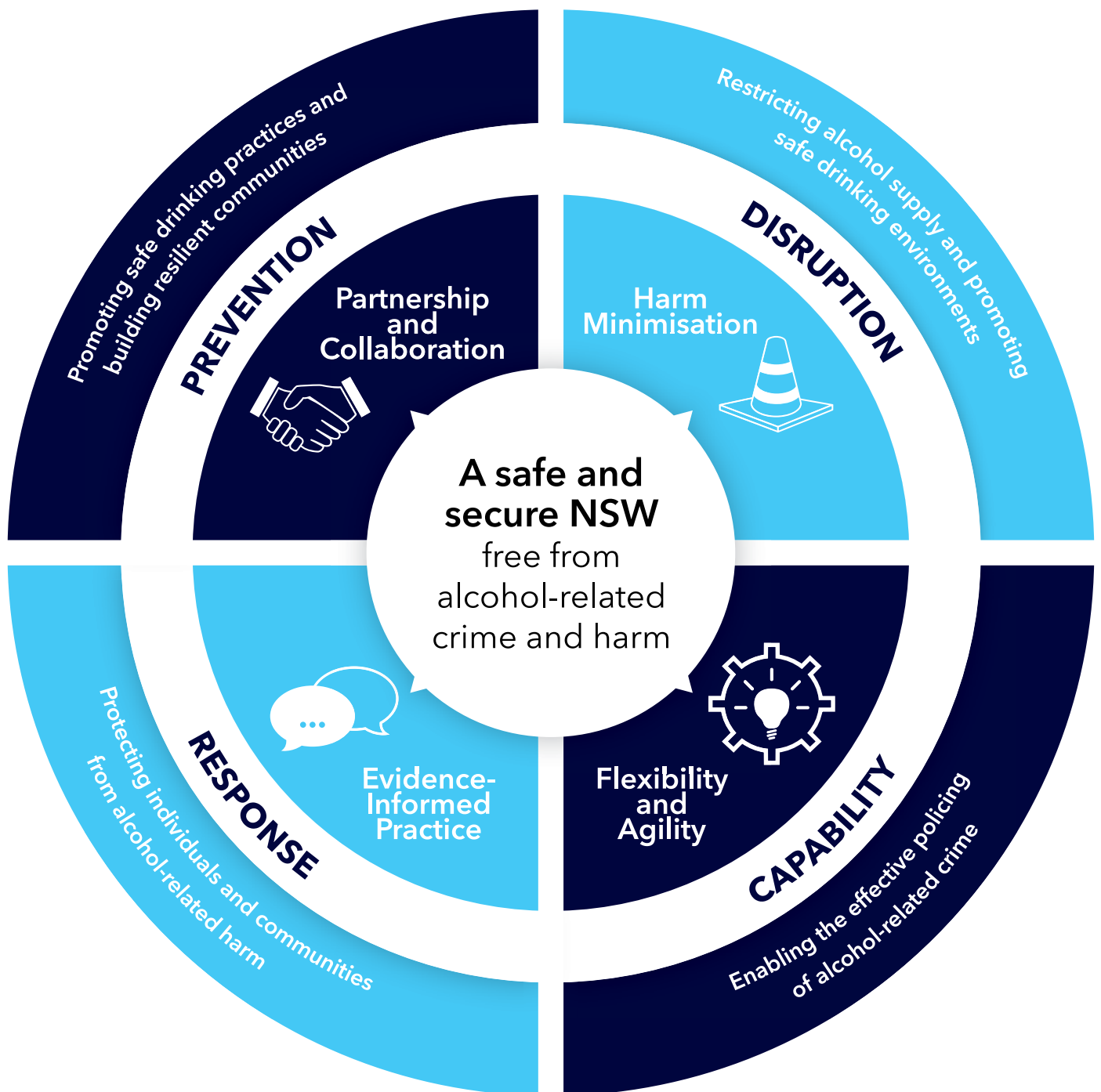
* NSWPF data 2017/2018



Young people, Aboriginal people and
women are particularly vulnerable to
alcohol-related harm and crime.



THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE



PREVENTION



Promoting safe drinking practices and building resilient communities

The earlier an individual begins to drink the greater the risk of harm, including their likelihood of offending or becoming a victim of crime. Prevention strategies that delay or prevent harmful drinking practices are a fundamental part of the NSWPF response to alcohol-related crime.

Activities can be directed at a population level or they can be targeted at those most at risk – both are effective. Those within the community with a greater risk of alcohol misuse and a heightened likelihood of coming to the attention of law enforcement because of their alcohol misuse include all males, young people and Aboriginal people.

Alcohol is a significant factor in the commission of crime, particularly anti-social behaviour and violent crimes, which is why police prevention activities focus on stopping and/or reducing the misuse of alcohol among offenders whose crimes are alcohol-related. Police need to; collaborate with licensees and management to ensure improved venue design and management practice are in place; ensure that licences are fit for purpose and complied with; and limit the number of licences in communities already exhibiting high levels of alcohol-related risk and stress. Diversionary programs and initiatives to address the underlying alcohol problem are also an effective longer-term strategy for reducing crime and improving public amenity and family safety.

OUR PRIORITIES

Partnership and Collaboration

- Develop strong and supportive partnerships with other agencies to prevent the misuse of alcohol.
- Work collaboratively with industry, government agencies and the community to protect high-risk groups and to develop local solutions for local problems.

Increased Awareness

- Participate in and support government and interagency campaigns and initiatives aimed at reducing excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm.
- Provide targeted information and support to 'at risk' groups to prevent and/or delay the uptake of alcohol consumption and to reduce excessive consumption.
- Raise community awareness about the legal consequences associated with the inappropriate provision and consumption of alcohol and to encourage personal responsibility.

Diversion

- Enhance opportunities, and police participation in, alcohol diversionary programs to reduce alcohol-related crime and harm.



Restricting alcohol supply and promoting safe drinking environments

There is strong evidence that as alcohol availability increases so too does consumption and alcohol-related harms. Availability is typically manipulated through price mechanisms and by regulation. Controlling who can sell alcohol and the conditions under which it can be sold, including the who, what, where and when have been found to be highly effective in reducing violence, traffic fatalities and injuries, rates of hospitalisation and emergency presentations, and underage drinking.

One of the most effective strategies in reducing excessive alcohol consumption and harm therefore, is the establishment of a strong legal and regulatory framework. The NSWPF plays a significant role in reducing the impact of alcohol misuse on individuals and the community through the enforcement of that legislative framework.

Police can promote safe alcohol consumption practices by working in partnership with licensees and other agencies. Police need to collaborate to ensure improved venue design and management practices are in place, that licences are fit-for-purpose and complied with, and to restrict the number of licences in communities already exhibiting high levels of alcohol-related risk and stress. Recognising the evidence around the relationship between off-licence premises and harmful alcohol use, a key priority in moving forward will be working with other agencies to tackle the increasing challenges posed by packaged liquor outlets, including the growing popularity of online alcohol sales and delivery services.

Ensuring the appropriate and lawful supply of alcohol is therefore a focus of the Strategy. Through the enforcement of legislation and regulations, NSWPF in partnership with our regulatory partners and industry, will promote and enable safe drinking environments in line with community expectations.

OUR PRIORITIES

Reducing violence and anti-social behaviour

- Maintain a strong enforcement focus on NSW Government priorities and initiatives targeting alcohol-related violence and public amenity.
- Use licensing legislation strategically and appropriately to disrupt unlawful and poor business practices.
- Respond to the emerging challenges associated with packaged liquor outlets, including the online purchase and delivery of alcohol.
- Disrupt business practices which promote excessive alcohol consumption.

Promoting Safe Drinking Environments

- Support local community stakeholder involvement in licensing processes to ensure business practices reflect community expectations.
- Build strong collaborative partnerships with stakeholders to positively influence management practices and promote safer drinking environments.
- Enhance and strengthening police involvement in the planning of alcohol-related events.
- Promote and enforce the responsible service of alcohol through effective compliance management.



Protecting individuals and communities from alcohol-related harm

Alcohol is a risk factor for a broad range of crimes including antisocial behaviour, drink driving, assaults, sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, and homicides. The consumption of alcohol, especially when at high levels, increases the risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of a (likely violent) crime. Recognition of the significant role that alcohol plays in crime, and acting to prevent further harm, are part of a comprehensive response by police.

It is important to remember that engaging with police can be a significant or defining moment for individuals, bringing their alcohol misuse into focus and motivating them to seek help. Police are well placed to refer both victims and offenders involved in alcohol-related incidents to appropriate services where problematic alcohol use and other associated issues can be managed.

As the government agency most involved in responding to alcohol misuse, police are often the first to recognise emerging issues and risks. We will continue to engage with agencies and communities to advocate for, and support the development of, local solutions to reduce risk and protect communities. We will also maintain our participation and support for effective government harm-reduction initiatives such as random breath testing (RBT).

Minimising the harms associated with the misuse of alcohol is a key focus of the Strategy. Understanding and accepting that individuals will continue to drink at levels that place themselves and others at elevated risk, it is essential that police are practical in their responses, employing and participating in demand and harm reduction strategies which mitigate potential risk.

OUR PRIORITIES

Community Safety

- Deploy intelligence driven RBT operations on our roads and waterways.
- Continue to support effective harm minimisation strategies.
- Monitor changes in alcohol markets and consumption practices to ensure agile and evidence-informed responses.

Reducing Vulnerability (Protecting the 'at-risk')

- Work with partner agencies to support victims impacted by alcohol-related crime.
- Ensure eligible offenders are appropriately referred to alcohol diversion programs.
- Enhance policing responses to the harmful consumption of alcohol by youth.
- Ensure the safety and appropriate management of those affected by alcohol.



Enabling the effective policing of alcohol-related crime

Alcohol-related crime and harm in the community is widespread and has a significant impact on policing resources. According to NSWPF data, 9% of all incidents dealt with by police in 2017 were alcohol-related. This is consistent with Donnelly et al. which found that overall 8% of police time was spent dealing with alcohol-related incidents⁵.

That study also found that there were variations in the amount of time police spent on alcohol-related crime across NSW. Statewide, a disproportionate amount of time was spent responding to alcohol incidents on weekends when people typically drink, and police in regional areas spent longer on average dealing with alcohol-related crime because of increased rates of use. The study highlighted that a broad range of police are involved in alcohol-related incidents. These are resources being used to respond to preventable risks, anti-social behaviour and crime.

The NSWPF recognises that the outcomes achieved by the Strategy will, in part, depend on the capacity of its workforce to respond appropriately and with confidence to alcohol-related crime and harm, engaging in activities across all four areas of strategic focus. Over the life of the Strategy it will be important to maintain and enhance specialist liquor licensing skills and capability as well as to enhance officer awareness and knowledge about the impact of alcohol on crime, the options available to them, and the evidence around the most effective policing responses. Capability is not simply about knowledge and skills however, it requires leadership and the strategic deployment of police supported by data, efficient processes and up-to-date technology. Increasing our capacity also requires that police build strong and trusted partnerships with stakeholders and effectively engage with them.

OUR PRIORITIES

Skills Enhancement

- Maintain specialist licensing skills and knowledge.
- Build capability across the NSWPF to enhance our response to the inappropriate and unlawful supply of alcohol.
- Develop greater capability within the NSWPF to respond appropriately to those involved in, and impacted by, alcohol-related crime and harm.

Efficiency

- Streamline and improve organisational processes/systems involved in responding to alcohol related crime.
- Increase the use of technology to improve police effectiveness and efficiency.

Leadership

- Actively collaborate with other government agencies and the community to develop effective responses to prevent and reduce alcohol-related crime and harm.
- Provide leadership in driving, monitoring and supporting the implementation of the Strategy.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

The Strategy is supported by the Corporate Alcohol Action Plan which outlines more detailed and specific actions that can be undertaken by police to effectively operationalise the key priorities identified. Importantly, it provides a blue print for action as police develop their business plans during the life of the Strategy.

As a collective, the NSWPF is responsible for the implementation of the Strategy. The actions taken by any one command however, will be shaped by local circumstances and the command's function within the NSWPF. The policing response across NSW will therefore vary, and no one command will be expected to implement every strategy. Instead, the policing response to alcohol-related crime and harm will be flexible, agile and targeted as commands tailor their activities to meet their local needs and emerging issues. Every command will however, play its role in creating a safe and secure NSW free from alcohol-related crime and harm.

GOVERNANCE

The Strategy sits within a Corporate Governance structure headed by the Corporate Sponsor who ultimately reports to the Commissioner of Police.

The Alcohol-related Crime Steering Committee, chaired by the Corporate Sponsor Alcohol-related Crime, has been established specifically to oversee and monitor the implementation and impact of the Strategy. It will be responsible for annually reviewing progress and for undertaking a more comprehensive mid-term review in 2022 to coincide with the release of the 2022 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. The Steering Committee is also responsible for identifying emerging issues and providing guidance and support in developing the NSWPF response to alcohol matters as they arise.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Measuring the progress being made is important in determining the effectiveness of the Strategy and informing future activity. In addition to the health and population indicators identified in the National Alcohol Strategy (NAS), the NSWPF will also monitor achievements / changes in the incidence and proportion of alcohol-related crime against the following key (crime) indicators:

- All crime
- Assault (non-DV)
- Domestic Violence
- Adult sexual assault
- Street offences
- Fatal road crashes
- Crashes resulting in serious injury
- Fatal on water crashes
- Vessel crashes resulting in serious injury

As well as:

- Incidents of Prescribed Concentration of Alcohol (PCA) offences on road and water; and
- Community perceptions of safety as measured by 'The National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing' and the 'National Drug Strategy Household Survey'.

REFERENCES

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- 2 www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/msbgsruprofiles.pdf
- 3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016: detailed findings. Drug Statistics series no. 31. Cat. no. PHE 214. Canberra: AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/2016-ndshs-detailed/contents/table-of-contents>
- 4 Trends in alcohol use and health-related harms in NSW: Report of the Chief Health Officer 2016. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health, 2016.
- 5 Donnelly, N., Scott, L., Poynton, S., Shanahan, M., Weatherburn, D. & Hansen, F. 2007, 'Estimating the short-term cost of police time spent dealing with alcohol-related crime in NSW', NDLERF Monograph Series, No. 25, National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund, Hobart.



NSW Police Force