



CITY OF BALLARAT

Social Policy Position Statement



August 2022

Reducing Harm from Alcohol and Other Drugs

Context

Addressing the harms associated with alcohol and other drug use has been a long-term, complex problem for all levels of government. The misuse of alcohol and other drugs, including tobacco, is widely recognised in Australia as a major health problem, and one that has broader social and economic costs.

The *Victorian Local Government Act 2020* requires Councils to provide the best outcomes for the community, while having regard to the long-term cumulative effects of decisions. Local governments play an important role in balancing the contribution that licensed premises make to the vitality of our local areas, with management of the social, economic and health impacts of alcohol and other drug misuse in local communities.


The responsibilities of Councils regarding the management of alcohol and other drugs issues are defined within various state legislation, including the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, the *Victorian Local Government Act 2020*, the *Victorian Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* (in relation to licensed premises) and the *Tobacco Act 1987*.

In line with the City of Ballarat's *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021- 2031*, Council has a role in helping reduce alcohol and other drug-related harm by supporting and promoting alcohol and drug-free events, addressing place-based safety issues, and considering public amenity and potential for misuse and abuse when reviewing liquor licence applications. However, the City of Ballarat acknowledges that it is limited in what it is able to achieve, and relies on a wide range of partners working together to implement effective supply-reduction, demand-reduction and harm reduction strategies.

Local governments must balance the part that alcohol plays in Australian society with the risks to health, safety and wellbeing its misuse can pose for the community. Alcohol often accompanies socialising and celebrations, generates employment and revenue, activates streetscapes and enhances local identity as an entertainment and tourism destination; however, alcohol misuse contributes significantly to health and social issues.

The City of Ballarat's current role in reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs

After consideration of the accountability, capacity and relationships, it has been determined that the City of Ballarat has a **shared** role in relation to Alcohol and Other Drugs.

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|  | <p>Shared: The City of Ballarat is one of many responsible stakeholders.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for some aspects • Some capacity to act • Moderate City of Ballarat role required to improve community wellbeing outcomes. |
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In line with the *City of Ballarat Social Policy Framework 2018*, the principles of Equity, Inclusion, Proactive, Leadership, Collaboration and Compassion are to be considered in all new social policy development, provide a foundation for action and can be seen in the current City of Ballarat role in relation to reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs as identified below. Fully integrating these principles into different aspects of social policy work will take time and will require the dedicated efforts of everyone involved.

Planner/ regulator

- Addresses amenity impacts resulting from licensed premises as delegated in the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
- Makes submissions regarding amenity and social impacts, including community safety, to the Victorian Liquor and Gaming Authority, as permitted through the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998.
- Conducts enforcement visits to tobacco retailers, eating establishments, licensed premises and gaming venues to promote an understanding of the Tobacco Act 1987 legislation and ensure compliance is achieved.
- Prohibits, regulates and controls the consumption of alcohol in designated public areas within the municipality through the Community Local Law 2017.

Advocate

- Participates in relevant Alcohol and Other Drugs networks and partnerships, which focus on crime prevention and minimising the harms caused by alcohol and associated drugs in Ballarat.
- Participates as a member of the Ballarat Liquor Accord.
- Encourages, promotes and runs alcohol and drug-free community events.

Educator

- Conducts educational and enforcement visits to tobacco retailers, eating establishments, licensed premises and gaming venues to promote an understanding of the Tobacco Act 1987 legislation.
- Assists young people and the broader community to reduce risk-taking behaviour associated with harmful use of alcohol and other drugs.
- Provides and promotes information on local support services.

Capacity Builder

- Works in partnership with schools and clubs to ensure health promoting behaviours are supported.
- Encourages sport clubs to participate in the Good Sports Program and in forums and courses around liquor licensing, gender equity and responsible serving of alcohol.

Service Delivery

- Undertakes needle/syringe collection, including free disposal containers to community members, and street cleansing activities.
- Provides security personnel at two CitySafe Taxi Rank sites in the Central Business District (CBD) on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Maintains and administers a Public Place Closed Circuit (CCTV) Television Camera Program in the CBD.
- Provides 'QUIT' support and referral for alcohol and other drug services through Maternal and Child Health services.
- Implements Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in public open space development
- Offers programs and events for young people which are alcohol, drug and smoke-free regardless of age.

Key Messages – Alcohol and other drugs

- The misuse of alcohol and other drugs, including tobacco, is widely recognised in Australia as a major health problem, and one that has broader social and economic costs. The City of Ballarat supports and advocates for harm minimisation approaches to the use of alcohol and other drugs in Ballarat.
- In addressing the local impacts of alcohol and other drug use, the City of Ballarat acknowledges that it is limited in what it is able to achieve and relies on a wide range of partners working together to implement effective supply-reduction, demand-reduction and harm reduction strategies.
- The City of Ballarat has legislative responsibilities in relation to alcohol and other drugs, which are defined by the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, the *Victorian Local Government Act 2020*, the *Victorian Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* and the *Tobacco Act 1987*.
- The City of Ballarat conducts educational and enforcement visits to tobacco retailers, eating establishments, licensed premises and gaming venues to promote an understanding of the *Tobacco Act 1987* legislation, including new amendments requiring outdoor dining areas to be smoke-free.
- The City of Ballarat works in partnership with schools and sporting clubs to ensure health promoting behaviours are supported.
- The City of Ballarat encourages, promotes and delivers a range of events and programs which are alcohol, drug and smoke-free.
- Research shows the social impacts of illegal drugs can include relationship breakdown, child neglect and family violence.⁷
- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs, in particular the use of opioids, codeine and benzodiazepines, are increasing and are emerging as an issue of concern.⁷
- Excessive alcohol consumption, placing people at risk of both short and long-term harm, is an issue in Ballarat, with nearly 70 per cent of the adult population having an increased lifetime risk of alcohol related harm, and 54 per cent of the adult population having an increased risk of alcohol-related injury on a single occasion.⁴
- In Ballarat, the rate of people over the age of 18 who were current smokers in 2020 was 16.1 percent, which is lower than the state average of 16.4 percent.⁹

Key data and trends

National drug and alcohol trends

At a national level, the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)³ found the following trends:

- Fewer Australians are smoking daily than ever before, with national rates at 11.0% in 2019, down from 12.2% in 2016 and 24% in 1991.
- The number of people drinking at levels that put their health at risk has remained stable since 2016. In the case of lifetime risk, 17.2% of people in 2016, and 16.8% of people in 2019 drank more than 2 drinks per day on average.
- Between 2016 and 2019, lifetime and current use of e-cigarettes increased among both smokers and non-smokers.
- More than 1 in 5 (21%) Australians (or 4.5 million people) had been a victim of an alcohol-related incident in 2019 (verbally or physically abused or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol). This proportion has not changed since 2016
- More people used illicit drugs (excluding non-medical use of pharmaceuticals) in the 12 months leading up to the survey (14.1%) compared to 2016 (12.6%). Use of 6 illicit drugs rose over this period— cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, hallucinogens, inhalants and ketamine

Alcohol and other drug use in Ballarat

- Excessive alcohol consumption, placing people at risk of both short and long-term harm, is an issue in Ballarat. The Victorian Population Health Survey 2017 shows that 62.8 percent of the adult population is at an increased lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm, and 45.9 are at an increased risk of alcohol-related injury on a single occasion⁴ (this indicator has not been measured at an LGA level since 2017).
- The rate of alcohol-related family violence incidents in Ballarat is also high, at double the rate of state levels.⁵ Alcohol can be seen as a contributing factor to family violence but is not considered an underlying cause.
- Illicit drug use is a major risk factor for ill health and death.⁷ Social impacts of illegal drugs can include relationship breakdown, child neglect and family violence. Prescription and over-the-counter drugs, in particular the use of opioids, codeine and benzodiazepines are increasing and are emerging as an issue of concern.⁷
- Between 2011 and 2020, 73 deaths were attributed to overdose in Ballarat.⁸
- In Ballarat, while we have seen an increase in drug-related ambulance attendances due to illicit drugs from 51 in 2011-12 to 137 in 2016-17, the rate of attendance is still lower than the state average (Ballarat: 132.5/100,000, Vic: 179.6/100,000)¹. Within these attendances, there was a higher percentage of males (65 per cent) than females (35 per cent).
- Despite the declining trend in tobacco smoking, it remains the single most preventable cause of ill health and death, being a major risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, cancer and various other diseases and conditions. Smoking disproportionately affects disadvantaged population groups, with smoking rates higher among Aboriginal people, people who experience psychological distress, people with a lower level of education, and people on low incomes or who are unemployed.⁶
- In Ballarat, the rate of people over the age of 18 who were current smokers (daily and occasional) in 2020 was 16.1 percent, which is slightly lower than the state average of 16.4 percent.⁹

Further Information

Legislation and regulation information:

- Victorian Liquor Control Reform Act 1998
vcglr.vic.gov.au/liquor/restaurant-cafe/understand-your-liquor-licence/legislation-and-regulations
- Victorian Local Government Act 2020
localgovernment.vic.gov.au/council-governance/local-government-act-2020
- Victorian Planning and Environment Act 1987
planning.vic.gov.au/legislation-regulations-and-fees/planning-legislation
- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
health.vic.gov.au/about/legislation/public-health-and-wellbeing-act
- Victorian Tobacco Act 1987
[legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/ltobjst9.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/F3683BA2AE09159ECA257E73007C889D/\\$FILE/87-81aa084%20authorised.pdf](http://legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/ltobjst9.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/F3683BA2AE09159ECA257E73007C889D/$FILE/87-81aa084%20authorised.pdf)

Research, data and publications:

- Australian Government, Primary Health Networks, Alcohol and Other Drug information
health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PHN-AOD_links
- Turning Point: Alcohol and other drug statistics
aodstats.org.au
- VicHealth - Unlocking liquor licensing, Resource 1: Planning Permits for licences premises 2014
vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/resourcecentre/
- Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association
vaada.org.au
- Victorian Department of Health, Tobacco Reforms
health.vic.gov.au/public-health/tobacco-reform
- Western Victoria PHN, Needs Assessment: Alcohol and Other Drugs
westvicphn.com.au/about-us/publications/needs-assessments

Services and support

- **Health Direct** provides an online directory of Alcohol and Other Drugs treatment services available in Ballarat. To access the information visit:
healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services/results/ballarat-3350/tihcs-aht-10870/drug-and-alcohol-treatment-services?undefined&pageIndex=1&tab=SITE_VISIT
- **Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO)** run the regional Victorian AOD Intake Line. Call 1300 022 760 or visit acso.org.au/aod-mh-support
- **DirectLine:** 24/7 free and confidential alcohol and drug counselling and referral in Victoria. Call 1800 888 236 or visit directline.org.au

Related City of Ballarat policy documents

1. City of Ballarat Community Local Law 2017- Part 5 Alcohol Consumption and Smoking (p.49)
ballarat.vic.gov.au/media/4423141/community_local_law_2017.pdf
2. City of Ballarat Planning Scheme
planning-schemes.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/ballarat
3. City of Ballarat Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-31
https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%202021-2031_LR.pdf
4. Social Policy Framework 2018
ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/about-us/social-policy

Contact

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References:

1. Turning Point – Alcohol and other drug statistics. Available: <http://aodstats.org.au/VicLGA/> (Accessed: 19/07/2018).
2. VicHealth Indicators Survey – Ballarat Profile, 2015. Available: http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/media/4368201/vichealth_indicator_survey_2015_-_ballarat.pdf (Accessed: 19/07/2018).
3. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019: detailed findings. 2017. Available: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/2016-ndshs-detailed/contents/summary> (Accessed: 19/07/2018).
4. Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017. Available: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey-2017>. (Accessed 29/10/21).
5. Crime Statistics Agency Victoria. Available: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/> (Accessed 20/07/2018)
6. Australian National Preventative Health Agency – Smoking and Disadvantage Evidence Brief. Available [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/smoking-disadvantage-evidence-brief/\\$FILE/Screen%20res-Smoking&Disad_ev%20brief.pdf/](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/smoking-disadvantage-evidence-brief/$FILE/Screen%20res-Smoking&Disad_ev%20brief.pdf) (Accessed: 14/11/2018)
7. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Illicit drug use – current and future issues. Available: https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/b54c4992-f761-421f-9e09-a92216b6d23a/5_5-illicit-drug-a.pdf.aspx (Accessed: 14/11/2018).
8. Coroner's Court of Victoria. Victorian Overdose Deaths, 2011-2020. <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-07/CCOV%20-%20Overdose%20deaths%20in%20Victoria%202011-2020%20-%2029Jul2021.pdf> (Accessed 29/10/21)
9. Victorian Population Health Survey, 2020. Available from: https://www.bettersaferecare.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/202111/2020%20VPHS%20Dashboard_FINAL%20202107014_1.xlsm (Accessed 16/11/2021)