

## Calls to regulate alcohol industry's influence on health policies

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A new study, out today in *Drug and Alcohol Review*, has shown that alcohol industry organisations consistently misused and misrepresented evidence in their submissions into Australia's National Alcohol Strategy.

The [National Alcohol Strategy](#) was released in late 2019, after 4 years of consultation and development. The strategy is a crucial document for alcohol policy making in Australia, as it shapes the direction for alcohol policy for all levels of government and came after an 8-year period with no strategy.

The study, *Unpacking assertions made by the alcohol industry and how they make them: An analysis of submissions into Australia's National Alcohol Strategy*, was authored by experts from Menzies School of Health Research, the National Drug Research Institute, La Trobe University's Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, and The George Institute for Global Health.

The study analysed submissions from the alcohol industry to the National Alcohol Strategy. It showed that industry submissions from a range of organisations consistently promoted non-evidence based, ineffective policy measures, and downplayed the social and health harms of alcohol.

The research also showed that the industry deliberately misquoted evidence, manipulated, misused and ignored evidence throughout their submissions.

As a result, the study recommends that close scrutiny of alcohol industry submissions through policy submission processes is essential. The study also suggests a model of governance similar to protections of public policy from tobacco industry influence is needed. This would prevent the alcohol industry's attempts to undermine evidence-based public health policy through inaccurate submissions and claims.

### Quotes attributable to Lead Researcher, [Mia Miller](#) from Menzies School of Health Research

"Making submissions is one of the most common and accessible ways that people and organisations can contribute to policy-making processes in Australia. Our study shows that there is real cause for concern if submissions made by organisations with vested interest are being accepted by policymakers on face value."

"We found examples where the industry quoted studies incorrectly and cherry-picked evidence that suited their cause. They also promoted evidence funded by the industry, which may be subject to industry influence and bias, over independent analysis."

"The alcohol industry also uses other fora to influence policy that cannot be as easily publicly scrutinised as submissions. It is time for a rethink in Australia as to how involved in policy processes the alcohol industry should be. We urge governments to work with researchers to develop a way forward to assess the quality and accuracy of information provided within submissions."

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**Menzies School of Health Research**

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