



# Supporting parents to delay and reduce adolescent alcohol use

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Government of **Western Australia**  
**Mental Health Commission**



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# Australian statistics on adolescent drinking<sup>1</sup>

- Rates of use have declined over the past three decades
- The proportion of students reporting they have never drunk alcohol has more than tripled
- One in three (29.8%) drank at risk of single occasion harm although this was substantially reduced compared to 2011 (36.2%)



<sup>1</sup> Alcohol think again <https://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/Resources/Alcohol-Use-Statistics>

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# Australian statistics on adolescent drinking<sup>1</sup>

- Most students usually drink premixed spirits (45.1%) and spirits (31.1%)
- 11.7% of students indicated they drank premixed alcoholic energy drinks
- **One in three students sourced alcohol from their friends (30.5%) and parents (30.4%)** and almost one in ten from a sibling (8.7%)



<sup>1</sup> Alcohol think again <https://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/Resources/Alcohol-Use-Statistics>

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# Supporting parents to delay and reduce adolescent alcohol use

The role of schools

Supporting parents to support youth

Talk Early Talk Often



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# Part one: The role of schools

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- To explore the feasibility of delivering an intervention for parents through schools
- Interviews with:
  - Community stakeholders (n=11)
  - School staff members (n=13)
  - Parents (n=28)





# Results

- Schools
  - Saw the value in providing information for parents
  - Hindered by a lack of time & resources
  - Link parents with external resources but not run programs themselves
- Parents
  - Not the schools responsibility – but it would be useful to get info from schools
- Stakeholders
  - Both parents and schools indicated a need for information alcohol



# Alcohol use on WA school premises<sup>1</sup>

- Principals are responsible for granting permission for functions to be held *on school premises at which alcohol is to be supplied or sold*.
- Principals will ensure that all requirements relating to the *Liquor Licensing Act* are met.
- Principals must ensure that community standards and expectations, and the reputation of the school are taken into account in relation to the use of alcohol on school premises.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Education, WA  
<http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/policies/alcohol-on-school-premises.en?cat-id=3457100> relation to the use of alcohol on school premises





# Alcohol use on school premises<sup>1</sup>

- The average number of annual liquor licenses was highest amongst Independent schools followed by Catholic and public schools. <sup>1</sup>
- Alcohol is used in Australian schools for three main reasons:
  - To generate revenue
  - For ritualised or celebratory purposes
  - Recreational usage <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ward, B. M., Kippen, R., Munro, G., Buykx, P., McBride, N., Wiggers, J., & Clark, M. (2018). Liquor licenses issued to Australian schools. *BMC Public Health*, 18(1), 72.

<sup>2</sup> Munro, G., Buykx, P., Ward, B., Rae, J., & Wiggers, J. (2014). Adult drinking in Australian schools. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 38(3), 205-208.



# Part two: Parents and students



## **Supporting Parents to Support Youth** project

- Sequential mixed-methods design over 18 months.
- Online cross-sectional surveys n=823
- Year 7, Year 10 and Year 12 students non-government schools (n=5)
- 298 parents of students in these year levels (n=124 child-parent pairs)
- Focus groups and interviews (n=41 parents)



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SUPPORTING PARENTS  
TO SUPPORT YOUTH

# Supporting Parents to Support Youth intervention recommendations

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1. Content should reflect the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Alcohol Guidelines<sup>1</sup> for Young People.
2. Focus on adolescents' health and educational outcomes, rather than on improving parenting.
3. Present practical examples and demonstrations of parenting strategies and behaviours, rather than simply giving information on what parents should and should not be doing.

<sup>1</sup> <https://nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol>



# Supporting Parents to Support Youth intervention recommendations

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4. Intervention messages that empower parents to use strategies that prevent, reduce or delay adolescents' alcohol use.
5. Interventions should include a range of strategies/scenarios that are tailored to parents' needs at different stages of their child's development.
6. Parent messages should be brief, simple and practical.

# Key intervention messages should focus on:

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- a. **Parents not providing alcohol to their under 18 year old child**
- b. Parents making their expectations and rules clear to their child
- c. Parental communication with their child about strategies to resist peer influence to drink and to cope with situations in which they feel uncomfortable related to alcohol use
- d. Responsible parental use of alcohol.



# Part three: Intervention for parents of year 7s



- **Talk Early Talk Often**
- Intervention group: Alcohol & cybersafety (n=13)
- Comparison group: Cybersafety (n=13)
- Intervention: Family event facilitated by SDERA
- Online parent resources
- Pre-post parent surveys
- Trial to be conducted in 2019





# Why alcohol and cybersafety?

- Year 7 is a big transition year for children
- At 13, children are able to use social media platforms, and cybersafety becomes more of a concern for parents
- Alcohol can also start to be offered in their environment – from parents (sips), friends and others
- Use of alcohol and cyber behaviours are also linked, e.g., sharing images and bullying



The messages  
around  
alcohol and  
cybersafety  
are *almost* the  
same ...

- Talk Early – its never too early to talk about your child’s safety
- Talk Often – keep talking
- Know the risks
- Set very clear expectations
- Do not supply
  - Sips and tastes can train them to drink more later
  - Internet without filters, passwords protection, privacy settings
- Find the words that work for you



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# Objectives of the project

- Increase number of parents who set clear rules & expectations around alcohol and digital technology use
- Increase parent-child communication
- Increase parent self-efficacy
- Increase number of parents who do not supply alcohol to their children / take positive steps to mediate their child's use of digital technology |



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# What's next?



- Seeking expressions of interest from schools to participate
- Great opportunity for schools to engage parents at the start of high school
- Schools are supported by SDERA and the research team
- CHAT schools can use this towards parent engagement goals



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Thank you!

Any questions?



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