



**TASA** The Australian  
Sociological Association

**TITLE: Politics and alcohol policy: the line between evidence and influence**

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Alcohol is a product that is not the same as cornflakes or washing powder, it is not an 'ordinary commodity'. Alcohol is a drug that has a depressive effect on the central nervous system; an addictive substance; a known carcinogen, a known cause of birth defects and second only to tobacco as a preventable cause of death and hospitalisations in Australia. However, it is increasing sold and promoted in ways similar to these products without consideration to the harms that it causes. Alcohol's sale and supply is restricted by Governments which set regulations about who can purchase alcohol, who can sell it, when and where it can be sold and what revenue is collected. Regulation is not static, it is prone to attack from vested interests and political influence calling for 'commercial realisations,' neo-liberalisation and less restrictive policies. The outcome of these attacks and impact on the nation's health can be seen in the results of applying market base (competition) policy to alcohol and the increase in alcohol harms across Australia. Alcohol policy is again being challenged by the current Senate Nanny State Inquiry on measures that restrict personal choice 'for the individual's own good.'