



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025

Submission number: 006

Submitter: Alcohol and Drug Foundation

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Standing Committee on Legal Affairs
196 London Circuit
Canberra ACT 2601
Via allison.reid@adf.org.au

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs,

Re: Inquiry into the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025.

As a leading organisation in the prevention of alcohol and other drug harms, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) supports modernising alcohol laws to better protect the community and reduce preventable harm.

The ADF welcomes the Australian Capital Territory Government's introduction of evidence-based reforms to regulate the online sale and delivery of alcohol (OS&D). As the explanatory memorandum notes, the ACT currently has no framework for regulating OS&D, making the *Liquor Amendment Bill 2025* both timely and necessary.

The Bill introduces a suite of nation-leading protections for consumers – such as the two-hour safety pause, limits on the volume of alcohol that can be delivered within a 24-hour period, and a ban on leaving same-day alcohol deliveries unattended – as well as important measures to support delivery staff like specialised RSA training and clear guidance. These reforms will meaningfully reduce alcohol-related harm in the ACT while maintaining responsible access to alcohol.

OS&D and alcohol related harms

Online alcohol sales in Australia have grown rapidly over the past decade, increasing from \$539 million in 2012 to more than \$2 billion in 2022, with annual revenues rising by an average of 19% since 2016.⁽¹⁾ This expansion represents a significant public health challenge. Unlike traditional retail, OS&D services bypass many of the safeguards that regulate access to alcohol – such as limits on outlet density, distance to outlets and in-person ID checks. While these services offer convenience, they also create greater potential for harm, particularly where rapid delivery is available.

Despite alcohol industry stakeholder claims to the contrary, national, peer reviewed academic evidence shows that people who use rapid delivery services are more likely to drink at higher-risk levels

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and extend drinking sessions,(2) report symptoms of intoxication including memory loss and injury,(3) and anticipate drinking more because of the convenience of OS&D.(4) Increased intoxication elevates the risk of injury, death, suicide, violence (including family and domestic violence), and mental ill-health. These harms are more common at night – the period when OS&D services are most frequently used.(5)

Available evidence shows that drinkers, absent OS&D options, are unlikely to drink and drive when they run out of alcohol; they simply stop drinking.(6) Running out of alcohol is a natural barrier to extended drinking sessions. The ADF supports the ACT government's efforts to ensure this commonsense, evidence-based barrier to alcohol harm is not interrupted by commercially motivated late-night OS&D licensing hours.

ADF's recommendations

While the ADF is strongly supportive of the Bill, we recommend two further amendments.

First, most of the new safeguards should apply to all alcohol deliveries, not only same-day services. While certain measures – such as the two-hour safety pause – are necessarily specific to rapid delivery, other protections should operate universally. For example, alcohol should never be left unattended at a residence, regardless of when it was ordered.

Second, the ADF recommends that harm minimisation be made the paramount object of the *Liquor Act 2010*. This change would future-proof the regulatory framework and ensure that policymakers and decision-makers consistently consider the impact on alcohol-related harm when assessing licence applications or proposing further reforms.

Next steps

The ADF notes that the Government's original reform package included changes to laws governing the promotion and marketing of alcohol.

Strengthening controls on alcohol marketing is a critical component of addressing the commercial determinants of health. ADF strongly supports the Government's commitment to introducing sensible, evidence-based advertising reforms that protect vulnerable community members, including children and young people, and reflect community expectations.

We acknowledge the complexity of this area and understand the decision to pursue these reforms separately. The ADF urges the ACT Government to continue progressing these reforms and hopes to contribute its expertise as required to the Government's forthcoming review of alcohol advertising and promotion.

Conclusion

The ADF reiterates its strong support for the Liquor Amendment Bill 2025 and encourages its passage without any weakening of the proposed safeguards. These reforms represent a significant step forward for alcohol harm prevention in the ACT. The ADF remains committed to supporting the Government in

implementing these measures and in progressing future reforms that further strengthen the ACT's alcohol regulatory framework.

Allison Reid

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