



THE PROBLEM

All children and young people in Australia have a right to grow up in a healthy environment. But when it comes to alcohol, children’s daily lives are full of promotions for an addictive, psychoactive product that can damage their developing brains. More alcohol means more harm for individuals, their families, and our broader community.

More alcohol sold also means more profits for the alcohol industry. That’s why the industry spends millions of dollars on advertising every year to make their products look appealing and push the notion that alcohol is an everyday commodity.

As a result, Australian children and young people grow up surrounded by alcohol advertising. Alcohol ads are often placed where children and teenagers are most exposed, including outdoors on billboards, public transport vehicles, and transit stops. Outdoor advertising is advantageous for the alcohol industry as it is ubiquitous and can’t be switched off, avoided,

or ignored. These ads are no longer just simple, static images; outdoor advertising is increasingly sophisticated and interactive, using digital display technologies and surveillance methods such as eye-tracking to target consumers and “build trust with communities”.¹ Market research from the Outdoor Media Association indicates that 92.6% of consumers are exposed to outdoor advertising at least once per day.²

Leading health authorities recommend governments restrict alcohol advertising in times and in places where children and young people would be exposed.³ Yet the Australian Government relies on a system of self-regulation, allowing alcohol companies to regulate themselves. There is no evidence that self-regulation is effective in protecting children and young people from exposure to alcohol advertising.⁴

This is of concern, because the evidence shows that the more alcohol advertising young people are exposed to, the

more likely they are to start drinking, and to drink more if they’re already drinking.⁵ The majority of Australians want stricter standards for how the alcohol industry markets and sells its products – particularly when it comes to children and teenagers.⁶

There has been very little movement by the Australian Government to better regulate the way alcohol is promoted. However, some state and territory governments have been taking action where they can by introducing restrictions on outdoor alcohol advertising so that children and young people can grow up in healthy environments.

So what’s the current state of play when it comes to outdoor alcohol advertising in Australia? We inquired with relevant ministerial offices, government departments, and non-government organisations in every jurisdiction in Australia to better understand what action has been taken.

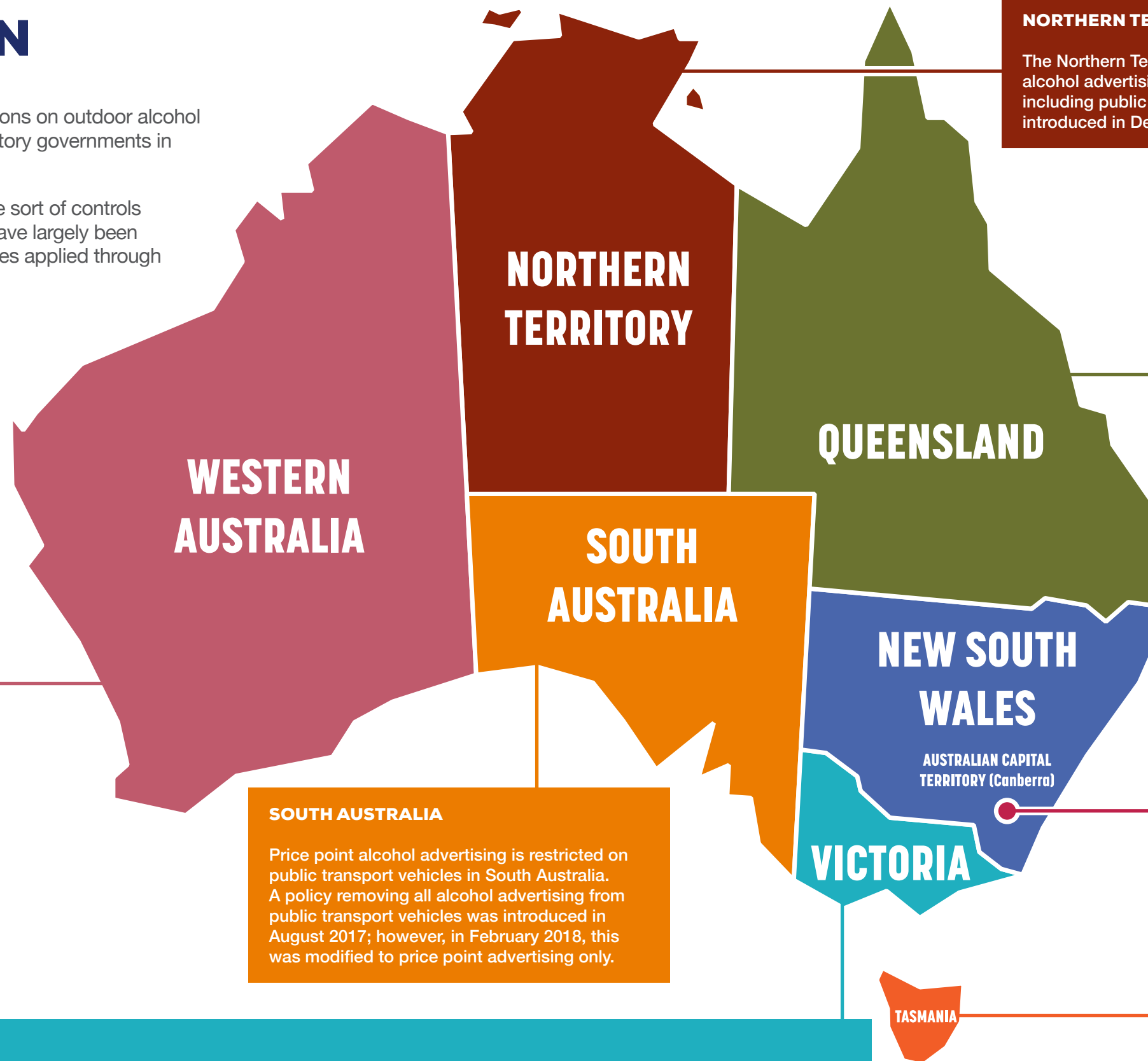
Here’s what we found.



THE SITUATION

This infographic outlines current restrictions on outdoor alcohol advertising introduced by state and territory governments in Australia

Most jurisdictions have introduced some sort of controls on outdoor alcohol advertising. These have largely been administered through government policies applied through contract variations.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Alcohol advertising is restricted on buses and at train stations in Western Australia. These restrictions were introduced through advertising contracts beginning with train stations in 2018 and buses in March 2019. Existing advertising contracts for trains are up for renewal in 2022. The Western Australian Government has not introduced restrictions on advertising on bus stops.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Price point alcohol advertising is restricted on public transport vehicles in South Australia. A policy removing all alcohol advertising from public transport vehicles was introduced in August 2017; however, in February 2018, this was modified to price point advertising only.

VICTORIA

In 2018, the Victorian Government made it an offence under the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 to display static alcohol advertising within 150m of a school, with some exemptions. The Government has also introduced restrictions on alcohol advertising in the current public transport partnership agreements (2017-2024) for trains, trams and buses. These restrictions were strengthened in the Melbourne City Loop in October 2018 to cover all paid content within the city loop.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Northern Territory Government has a policy prohibiting alcohol advertising on all commercial passenger vehicles including public transport, taxis and private hire cars. This was introduced in December 2017 and is applied through contracts.

QUEENSLAND

Alcohol advertising is to be restricted on all government-owned infrastructure. This policy was announced in April 2019 and will be phased in through contract variations. Restrictions will not apply to stadiums.

NEW SOUTH WALES

No restrictions were identified.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The ACT Government introduced a policy restricting alcohol advertising on buses in 2015. These restrictions were extended to light rail vehicles when the light rail system opened in 2019. The policy does not apply to bus stops.

TASMANIA

No restrictions were identified.

CALL TO ACTION

The World Health Organization recommends enforcing bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship, and promotion to reduce alcohol use among young people.² We can and we must do more to protect children from pervasive industry marketing tactics.

We are seeing the same pattern of events repeating itself from the 1980s bans on outdoor tobacco advertising, with some state and territory governments taking action on outdoor advertising years before the Australian Government. But this time the landscape is completely different. Alcohol advertising is no longer confined to the basic static billboard advertisement. It is digital, ephemeral, and cannot be switched off, making it impossible to control who sees it and ensuring people are exposed to more content than ever before. It is essential that regulatory action be prioritised in this era of data driven and subversive marketing.

We need our governments to step up and put people before profits. Despite fierce opposition from the alcohol and advertising industries, states and territories have taken action and it is time for the Australian Government to support them and listen to the community. It is time for the Australian Government to stop the current system of industry self-regulation, and work with the states and territories to introduce legislation removing alcohol advertising from all places where children and young people are exposed.

REFERENCES

- 1 Outdoor Media Association. Annual Report 2018. Sydney: OMA; 2019.
- 2 Outdoor Media Association. (Retrieved 23 October 2019) A Healthy Media Plan, data obtained from Day in the Life Study Research Now. Accessed <http://www.oma.org.au/facts-and-figures/research-and-insights/healthy-media-plan>
- 3 World Health Organization. Tackling NCDs: 'Best buys' and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017.
- 4 Reeve B. Regulation of Alcohol Advertising in Australia: Does the Abac Scheme Adequately Protect Young People from Marketing of Alcoholic Beverages? QUT Law Review. 2018;18(1):96-123.
- 5 Jernigan D, Noel J, Landon J, Thornton T, Lobstein T. Alcohol marketing and youth alcohol consumption: a systematic review of longitudinal studies published since 2008. Addiction. 2016;112:7-20.
- 6 Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education. 2019 Annual Alcohol Poll Attitudes & Behaviours. Canberra: FARE; 2019.