'What a great night': The cultural drivers of drinking practices among 14-24 year-old Australians

Jo Lindsay
Peter Kelly
Lyn Harrison
Christopher Hickey
Jenny Advocat
Sue Cormack

Final Report

A Monash University and Deakin University Consortium

MONASH University

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

DrinkWise Australia

Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Contents

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

The purpose of this research was to gather information about the cultural drivers of alcohol consumption by young people in Australia. While there is a substantial amount of quantitative information available on alcohol consumption patterns there is limited research on why different groups of young people consume alcohol in high-risk, risky or low-risk ways. There is little nuanced qualitative and socio-cultural research which explores young people's alcohol related practices and activities and why they engage in these activities. This report presents these findings which will be a crucial platform for developing effective public health interventions on youth drinking in Australia.

Young people's alcohol consumption is a complex field and a variety of cultural drivers have an impact on consumption patterns. These include broader social processes such as individualization, globalization, demographic and labour market change which makes youth a less certain and longer phase in the life-cycle for this generation of young people. At the same time, local drinking settings, drinking cultures and social networks of families and peers also have a direct impact on youth drinking. Finally, social location in terms of gender, age, social class, ethnicity, religion and geography shape drinking practices in important ways. We illustrate the meaning alcohol has for young people and connections with risk taking, identity and social context.

This project involved two complementary and largely qualitative studies: (1) the drinking biographies study involved in-depth interviews and a quantitative questionnaire with young people, aged 20-24 and (2) the sporting clubs study involved in-depth interviews and focus groups with young people and key informants at Victorian sporting clubs. Our research was conducted in inner and outer suburban settings plus provincial and rural locations in Victoria to identify the most salient cultural drivers of youth alcohol consumption.

Key Findings

Important Note: The following findings are preliminary. The identification and analysis of the complex relationships that we outline in what follows will be developed in a number of publications, conference presentations and papers over the next 12 to 24 months (see Appendix 1 for presentations and media contributions already made).

Alcohol consumption is a central feature of Australian culture and identity, particularly for young people. Many young people aged 18-24 drink alcohol on a regular basis. Drinking to intoxication is a common feature of socialising for young people aged 15-24 and is viewed as an important and largely pleasurable social experience. In a context where there is a strong imperative to drink the idea that young people should be 'responsible' 'low risk' drinkers at all times is problematic. Indeed it was very difficult for young people to abstain from alcohol consumption in the current context.

Mostly, young people frame their drinking experiences in a positive light. Young people drink for pleasure and to enhance their social lives, finding that drinking made social interactions easier and more comfortable and enhanced their social confidence. Nevertheless, most had experienced negative consequences of alcohol consumption including hangovers, and some had experienced vomiting, abuse, damage to social relationships and threatened or actual physical violence for men or sexual assault for women.

Heavy drinking is staged over the life course. The drinking biographies study yielded rich information about initiation into drinking and experimental drinking which usually occurs in the teenage years followed by heavy drinking in the present for the participants (aged 20-24). In the long term (20 years from now) most imagine they will go out less and drink less. Most felt that heavy drinking was a life-stage that they would grow out or leave behind and having children was imagined to be an important trigger for changing drinking and socialising patterns.

University colleges were identified as settings in which heavy drinking occurs. Consuming alcohol was central to social events hosted by colleges and alcohol was freely (or inexpensively) available. In recent years some university colleges have become aware of this issue and are seeking to modify college culture.

The key drivers of alcohol consumption identified by young people in the biographies study were friendships, easy access to alcohol and cheap drinks. These were key drivers of consumption for young people both when they were underage and once they turned 18. Friends and older siblings played a key role in introducing young people to alcohol and encouraging

them to drink. Young people commented that alcohol was very easy to access at most social occasions and they were likely to drink more if drinks were inexpensive and/or free.

The key deterrents of alcohol consumption were parents and laws when they were underage. On turning 18 various laws were identified as the key deterrents. Many of the young people found it difficult to identify deterrents to drinking. Parental influence was seen as a major deterrent to drinking, particularly while underage. Laws against drink driving were taken seriously and some were aware of laws against public drunkenness. By contrast, laws against underage drinking were seen as largely ineffective. Other deterrents identified by young people included self-control and the pressure of study and work commitments.

In contrast to the stereotypes of out of control youthful drinkers - many young people did talk about 'self-control' and made efforts to manage their drinking. They are very aware of the immediate harms of drinking – the damage to social relationships and the intense physical and psychological experience of hangovers. Aside from the influences of parents and laws, young people have many responsibilities in their lives, such as study and work, which often prevented them from drinking or drinking too much.

Rather than following guidelines and government proposed recommendations regarding alcohol intake, young people emphasise responsibility, meeting their obligations, not being a burden on others and not engaging in public displays of drunkenness of the type seen in media representations of young people and alcohol. The young people in the biographies study did not believe that proposed new drinking guidelines applied to them.

The preoccupation of alcohol researchers and public health practitioners in accurately measuring alcohol consumption and defining standard drinks is not shared by the young people in these research projects. Counting drinks is not a high priority. Instead harms seem to be measured and risks perceived in terms of physical and emotional experiences of being out of control.

We found that sports clubs are more than just places to play sport. They are community hubs. The social aspect of club sports plays a significant role in attracting players and volunteers and the clubs play an important role in the overall social life of the people interviewed. Sporting clubs implement a range of strategies to create environments that recognize and capitalize on their role as community hubs.

Creating family-friendly environments was an important strategy for many of the sporting clubs. Being known around the club was often cited by the 17-24 age group as having a self-moderating influence on their behaviour around the club.

The limited or measured serving of alcohol to under-age people (namely 17 year olds) became a grey area where parent presence at the club seemingly complicated issues of consent and consumption. Where BYO functions were part of the club social-mix (celebrations, events and functions), the amount of alcohol made available to under-age drinkers was viewed as irresponsible and problematic by a number of club officials.

Club leadership has an important impact on club culture and the consequent capacity to undertake cultural change. Numerous references were made to clubs having strategically shifted their culture to create welcoming family friendly environments through leadership change. Strong and informed leadership clearly offers clubs the potential to operate as change agents around the consumption of alcohol and the promotion of community sport to diverse participants. Developing a positive, responsible and respectful culture was integral to the pursuit of membership growth.

Clubs are highly attuned to their social and regulatory responsibilities around the serving of alcohol. Training, education and surveillance are important dimensions of a responsible club practice around alcohol consumption.

We have identified are highly complex relationships between young people, their families, peers and various contexts – including sporting clubs – that shape their understandings and uses of alcohol. Young people identify their club as a significant but not primary space for exposure to heavy alcohol consumption – home, school, friends and house parties are cited as far more significant influences than this social domain.

Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations in relation to the ways in which health promotion programs, policing and justice systems, alcohol and drug professionals, education systems, government departments and industry bodies understand the cultural drivers of young people's alcohol use:

1. Young people's use of alcohol and the ways that they understand, think and talk about alcohol often mirror or appear as similar to adult concerns. But they often have very different views to adults. Adult organisations, institutions, policy processes and systems should develop and deploy research, evaluation, and consultation processes that enable the diversity of young people's voices, and the tensions, contradictions and pleasures that shape these voices, to be included in debates about, and responses to, the 'problem' of young people's alcohol use.

2. The development, deployment and evaluation of policies, programs and interventions should account for the contradictory, problematic, and often pleasurable drivers and consequences of young people's use of alcohol.

3. If young people are to recognise themselves, their friends, and the things that are important in their lives in these policies, programs and interventions then they need to be addressed or engaged in ways that recognise the complexities that this research has identified.

Chapter 1. Introduction and background—Drinking Biographies and Sporting Club Studies

This research project gathered information about the cultural drivers of alcohol consumption by young people in Australia. Firstly, the research examined the role of alcohol in the context of young people's lives from the perspective of young people themselves, finding rich insights into the social and cultural drivers of alcohol use. This project also considered the role alcohol played in the ways young people established and practiced their identity, and the ways in which peer groups operated to normalise alcohol consumption within the context of community sporting club cultures, using Victorian community sporting clubs as a case study. Finally, this report explores the connections, links, and relationships between individuals and peer groups with respect to the low risk, risky and high risk alcohol consumption in the context of sporting club culture. Through the analysis of data from two interlinked studies, we report on young people's perspectives of the role of alcohol in their lives and the cultural drivers which support particular drinking patterns.

Contemporary youth and social change

The broader social context that young people inhabit has changed markedly over the last two decades. Broad social movements such as individualization and globalization, make youth a less predictable phase in the life-cycle for this generation of young people than their predecessors. Demographic and labour market change have contributed to an attenuation of 'youth' in countries such as Australia. As the labour market has changed it has become harder for young people to establish ongoing employment. Most spend a longer time in education, they stay living within the parental home for longer and life-stage transitions such as partnering and childbearing occur later in life. Those who are better off or live at home have more disposable income to spend on recreation and going out drinking (Chatterton and Hollands 2001, Lindsay 2004, 2005). These broader social changes are taken into account in the analysis of the drinking patterns of contemporary young people within this report.

Youth and alcohol consumption

It is well established that problematic alcohol consumption by young people is a serious and widespread issue. It has been argued that risky patterns of alcohol use are 'normative' among young people with many engaging in deliberative heavy drinking sessions where getting drunk is the primary purpose (DCPC 2006). Although problematic alcohol consumption is widespread, drinking is highly situational and how and why people drink varies according to immediate social context. The limited available research suggests that local drinking settings, drinking cultures and social networks of families and peers are likely to have a direct impact on youth drinking (Lindsay 2005, DCPC 2006).
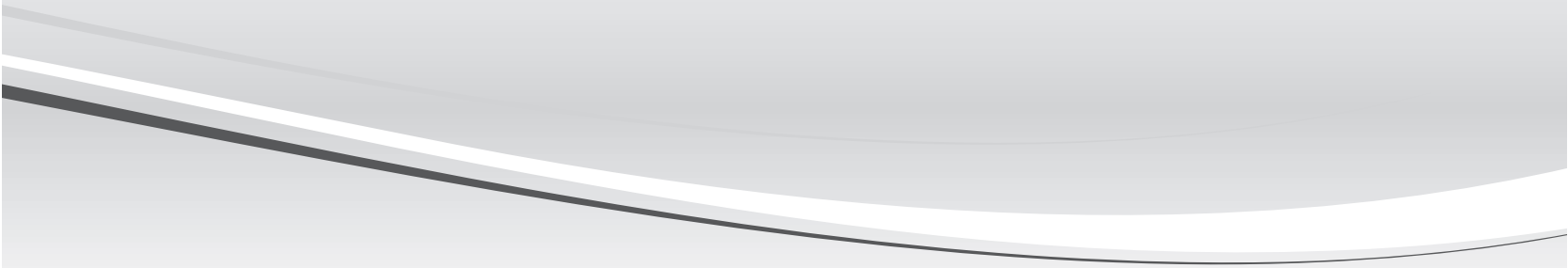
Contemporary youth are heterogeneous (Harrison 2000, Kelly 2003, 2001 a&b, 2000 a&b). Social location in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status (SES), ethnicity, religion and geography is likely to shape drinking practices in fundamental ways. Age differences and gender differences in alcohol consumption have received most research attention (eg DCPC 2006); this research was designed to account for these and future analysis will explore how these factors interact with SES, ethnicity and geography. We explored the meaning alcohol has for young people and connections with risk taking, identity and social context.

The participants in these studies were likely to consume alcohol at the higher levels now than at other times in their lives. In Australia, young people in their 20s drink more heavily than any other age group and those aged 18 to 25 are at the highest risk of alcohol related injury and harm (NHMRC 2001). The Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing found that 60 per cent of people with diagnosed alcohol dependence were in the 18 to 34 year-old age group (Proudfoot 2002).

Contradictory Messages

Young people receive contradictory information about alcohol consumption. In the contemporary social context control of alcohol for young people is highly contested and subject to contradictory forces – by the state, within mainstream Australian culture and for individuals governing their own drinking. The state is remarkably contradictory on alcohol control – on the one hand enabling or encouraging excitement and excess in the growing night time economy while on the other hand trying to control public intoxication and its consequences – eg the overdosing, accidents, assaults and public disturbance. Mainstream Australian culture is also inherently contradictory about alcohol. On the one hand consuming alcohol is viewed as central to adulthood and an indispensable element to socialising and celebrating while on the other hand young 'binge drinkers' are demonised and alcoholics are marginalised and viewed as irresponsible and amoral. On the one hand many young people are the targets of a range of alcohol marketing strategies and social relationships that normalise alcohol use and meanings associated with celebration, transition, cultural events, peer relationships, family events, education and sport. In contrast, as a consequence of concerns about potential harm and risk associated with patterns of alcohol use and consumption, young Australians are also the target of a range of health promotion strategies that attempt to normalise responsible alcohol use and consumption (Carroll 2002; Munro 2003).

Chapter 2. Drinking Biographies Study

A. Background and Approach

This study was comprised of individual, in-depth qualitative interviews, along with quantitative questionnaires, with drinkers in the 20-24 year old age group. We conducted sixty individual in-depth interviews (20 from Melbourne, 20 from Geelong and 20 from Warrnambool, 50% male and 50% female in each location). Interviews collected demographic and personal data, and encouraged participants to discuss their introduction to alcohol in their family lives growing up, throughout their time as young children, during high school, their experiences within their social groups and the role alcohol played beyond high school during their transition out of high school into University or full-time work. We asked questions which gauged their beliefs about the drivers and deterrents of alcohol use and about the risks and benefits of alcohol and the effects they believed it to have on their health. The drinkers interviewed were mostly experienced with alcohol from at least some point in their life and asked to reflect on their own induction into drinking cultures including where and how they learned to drink. We gathered information about changing drinking patterns over time and what cultural drivers propelled them into stages of high risk or low risk drinking. We collected in-depth information about links between alcohol consumption and study, work and leisure. The data provides important insights into risk taking and changing leisure and consumption landscapes for young people. We also examined drinking trajectories and identified cultural drivers, or triggers, of change between different patterns of drinking for young drinkers in their early 20s. They were asked to reflect on their induction into drinking cultures including where and how they learned to drink. We asked questions to understand how they define different types of drinking and we gathered information about changing drinking patterns over time and what cultural drivers propelled them into stages of high risk or low risk drinking as well as information about links between alcohol consumption and study, work and leisure. The data provides insights into risk taking and changing leisure and consumption landscapes for young people.

The aim of this research was to explore drinking trajectories of young Victorian drinkers in different locations and contexts to identify major triggers of change in drinking patterns. The literature suggests that there are different drinking patterns according to age group. In industrialised countries such as the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand there is a general pattern of transition from teenage drinking which involves infrequent episodes of heavy drinking to sustained heavy drinking in terms of both frequency and amount at ages 18-24. This is followed by a further transition to older adult drinking styles which involve more frequent drinking but reduced amounts drunk per session (Casswell, Pledger et al. 2002). Although these national contexts vary considerably in terms of drinking cultures, the general pattern holds of risky experimentation in the teenage years, leading to sustained heavy drinking particularly in the early 20s and 'maturing out' or 'settling down' into controlled drinking patterns as people take on the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood (Harnett et al 2000).

Specific life transitions which shape alcohol consumption patterns have been identified in the international literature. It is well established that leaving home and living with peers is likely to increase consumption (Casswell, Pledger et al. 2002). The residential college at university is a particularly wet context (Raskin White, McMorris et al. 2006). Employment also has an impact on drinking but not a simple relationship – it may act to increase consumption by introducing young people to heavy drinking networks and providing funds and access to the night time economy – particularly for young people still living at home (McMorris and Uggen 2000; Lindsay 2001; Raskin White, McMorris et al. 2006). By contrast the demands of work may also play a role in decreasing consumption for some groups of young people. Entering relationships has an impact on consumption – research suggests that marriage is likely to decrease consumption (Casswell, Pledger et al. 2002; Eng, Kawachi et al. 2005). Some research suggests that in heterosexual relationships men encourage women to drink more while women play a role in reducing men's consumption (Lindsay 2006). Having children has been shown to decrease consumption. Despite these general patterns individual patterns are often quite varied and heavy drinkers at adolescent are likely to remain heavy drinkers relative to their peers at other life stages (Auerbach and Collins 2006).

Harnett et al (2000) undertook qualitative research with young working class men in the UK and developed a typology of change over time. They argue that there are 4 distinct stages in drinking biographies (Harnett, Thom et al. 2000). First 'childhood drinking' usually consisting of tastes practiced within the family setting. 'Adolescent drinking' involves infrequent opportunities for alcohol consumption. The third drinking stage is more diverse and occurs within the 'socially open space' of contemporary youth lifestyles – this includes experimental drinking (includes learning to drink, trying different drinks and learning to manage intoxication through drinking games), sociable drinking and safe drinking in certain contexts and recreational drinking (which involves drinking to intoxication). Following these drinking patterns the final stage is 'structured' drinking where drinking is fitted around other responsibilities such as work and family (includes the work/play cycle). Alongside these drinking styles Harnett et

al identify 'therapeutic drinking' where alcohol is used to deal with various problems (Harnett, Thom et al. 2000). This typology provides a useful reference point for our Australian based drinking biographies research.

Quantitative research in Australia demonstrates changes in drinking patterns over the life course where the prevalence of drinking and high risk consumption peaks in the early 20s. According to Australian household data the age of drinking initiation or consumption of first full drink has fallen over the past 50 years with successive generations (Roche, Bywood et al. 2008). By age 15 just under half have consumed a full glass of alcohol, at age 16 over 60% have drunk, at age 17 over 70% have drunk and by age 18 90% have drunk alcohol (Roche, Bywood et al. 2008). Most Australians over 15 drink alcohol. The proportion of drinkers rises with age from 63% of 14-17 year olds, to a peak of 90% of 21-24 year olds where it remains fairly steady till age 50-59 where it declines to 85%. Risky drinking is widespread in Australia. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) define risky drinking for short term harm as 7-10 drinks on a day for men and 5-6 drinks on a day for women at least once a month (National Health and Medical Research Council 2001)The prevalence of high volume risky alcohol consumption rises from 18% among 14-17 year olds, to a peak of 46% among 18-20 year olds, 45% among 21-24 year olds, tapering off to 35% among 25-29 year olds and declining to less than 25% for age groups over 30 years of age (Roche, Bywood et al. 2008). The greatest proportion of low risk drinking in Australia occurs in the 50-59 age group.

Drinking preferences and drinking locations also tend to change according to age. One notable difference between the Australian and the UK drinking contexts for underage drinkers is that in the UK young people tend to drink in unsupervised outdoor locations (Coleman and Cater 2005) while in Australia drinking at home, at friends houses and at house parties is the norm (Roche, Bywood et al. 2008). By age 18 pubs and clubs are added to these domestic locations as preferred places to drink (Roche, Bywood et al. 2008). For underage drinkers sprits are preferred drinks – by themselves or pre-mixed, along with beer for young men. By age 18 regular strength beer becomes more popular for men alongside spirits and by age 21 young women add bottled wine to spirits in their preferred list of drinks (Roche, Bywood et al. 2008).

How do young people make sense of and negotiate the Australian drinking culture as they move from their teenage years to their early 20s and their imagined futures? In this research we document drinking biographies of young people from a range of different backgrounds to illustrate the diversity of drinking patterns over time but also the important ways in which these are shaped by the social context and the contemporary drinking landscape in Australia.

1. **Research ethics**

Ethics clearance was received from the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) at Monash University. Participants were recruited in accordance with this ethical clearance and participants of the individual interviews also provided informed consent for their interviews to be digitally recorded and for their confidentiality to be protected.

2. **Recruitment strategies**

Our recruitment strategy was designed to capture a diverse sample in terms of gender, ethnic background and socio-economic background. As geographic difference is particularly important in shaping young people's opportunities and experiences we chose three key sites for comparison. We used the broad categorisation of *metropolitan* (Melbourne), a *de-industrialising provincial city* (Geelong), and a *rural seaside town* (Warrnambool) to access a diverse sample for different elements of the project. Geelong is a provincial city with a population in excess of 190,000, with many remote small towns nearby on the Surf Coast, such as Lorne and Apollo Bay. Warrnambool is also a provincial city, but much smaller than Geelong, with a population less than 30,000. It neighbours rural towns such as Terang and remote small towns such as Penhurst, Cobden and Mortlake.

Initially, we planned to recruit Melbourne based participants from specific suburbs and locations around Melbourne, to get a purposive sample with varied socio-economic status. However, recruitment from specific places such as cinemas and shopping centres was extremely difficult whereas University students were much more willing to participate. Our Melbourne and Geelong sample was, therefore, made up largely of University students . In Warrnambool we were able to connect with a more diverse social network so this sample is less dominated by students.

Given the increased movement of young people from country and regional areas to the city, and vice versa, we encountered some issues about location in our initial recruitment strategy. We found that many participants who were living and studying

in Geelong grew up in Melbourne and likewise, participants living and studying in Melbourne who grew up in Geelong. The increased mobility of young people makes it difficult for research to draw simple conclusions about the interplay of geographical location and drinking cultures.

To uncover the cultural drivers of both risky and low risk alcohol consumption it was important to recruit a diverse sample for the biographies study. It is well established that men displaying traditional versions of masculinity are likely to drink excessively. More recent research has also identified inner-city women in professional jobs, and those in tertiary education, as high consumers of alcohol in drinking venues. (Lindsay 2003, 2005). It is equally important to explore the drinking trajectories of low-risk drinkers to examine the drivers of safe drinking practices as a basis of health intervention. A few of the participants were non-drinkers, providing different experiences to contrast to the mainstream.

We used mainly convenience and snowball sampling from various sources, including, University lectures (Deakin and Monash Universities); student university internet service (Blackboard); Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, which is a busy inner city street with many young people and drinking establishments; word of mouth at Sporting Clubs; and through an advertisement in local music magazine (Geelong based *Forte*). In Warrnambool, a number of participants were recruited at the University and the rest were recruited via snowball sampling through young people known to the researchers.

Following recruitment, the interviews were conducted at the local university, or, if the participants preferred, it was conducted at their home.

3. Sample

The drinking biographies project examined change in drinking patterns over time and influences on high-risk and low-risk drinking. Twenty six males and 34 females participated in the research, 73% were studying full-time, 20% worked full-time and 62% worked part-time. The interviews focussed on experiences with alcohol over the life course so far, as well as imagined future consumption.

Sixty young people participated in the interviews: 20 participants from each geographic location. Slightly more women agreed to participate than men in each location. We found that overall, as reflected in our sample, younger people were more willing to participate. In a related way, we found that university students were more forthcoming and participated in the research more readily than young people not studying.

4. Data Analysis

This study collected primarily qualitative data but also some quantitative data. Quantitative data was collected via questionnaires that were completed by the participants during one-to-one interviews. The questionnaires were used as conversation starters. The qualitative data was in the form of transcripts from the interviews where participants talked at length about why they chose particular responses. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken and this was supported by the use of NVivo 7, qualitative research software. A coding scheme was developed and the analytic strategies outlined by Miles and Hubberman (Miles and Huberman 1994) and Lofland and Lofland (Lofland and Lofland 1984) were utilised. Using negative case analysis the themes were tested for consistency and divergence.

Questionnaire answers were entered into SPSS and the recorded interviews were transcribed in full. These transcripts were then coded, using NVivo qualitative research software, for themes which arose, both from the data and the literature review, and for demographic data.

B. Findings

1. Key Drivers and Deterrents According to Young People

The questionnaires were structured chronologically; participants were asked to reflect on their experiences from childhood, then as teenagers to the age of 18, from 18-21 years old and then, if they were older than that we went through another section 21-24. Participants were asked in the sections for teenager, 18-21 year old and 21-24 to rank from one to seven things that they believed encouraged them to drink. They chose from the following: Advertising, Parents, Other Family (brothers/sisters/extended), Friends and Peers, Sports Stars, Celebrations, Cheap drinks, Easy access to alcohol. They were then asked to explain their answer to the interviewer. In a separate question, they were asked to rank from 1-9 things that discouraged them from drinking. They chose from the following: Health campaigns, Parents, Family (brothers/sisters/extended), Friends and peers, Laws, Authority figures, Cost of drinks, Access to drinks, School education programs and Other. Participants were told only to rank the influences that they thought encouraged them, or discouraged them, and to leave them blank if the choice did not resonate with them at all. Differences between genders, locations and other demographic information will be explored in future analysis.
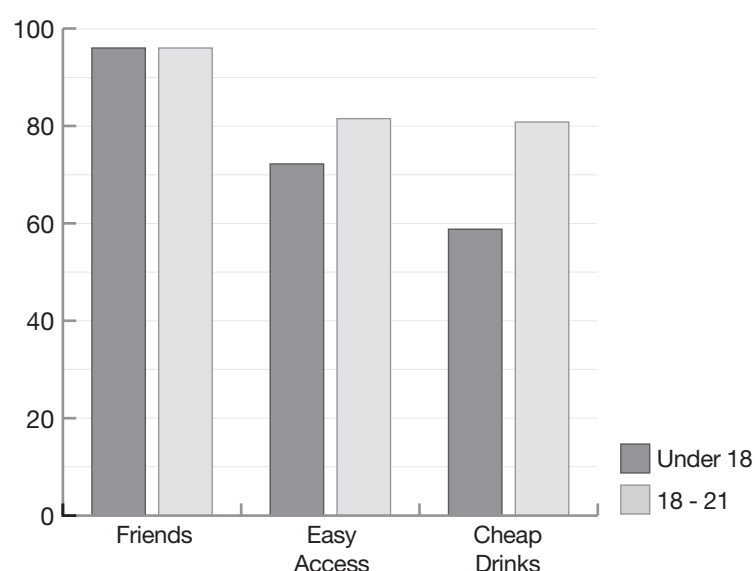
Figure 1: Drivers - the top 3 things influencing young people to drink alcohol

Friends were ranked as the number one influence encouraging participants to drink when they were under 18 by 81.8% of respondents and 71.9% ranking it their number 1 influence 18-21 years old. While friends declines in importance for participants considering it as their number one influence for the ages 18-21, for both age groups, about 96% of respondents ranked friends in the top three things that encourage them to drink.

A 21 year old male in Melbourne reflected on the importance of his friendship group as a teenager. Chris said,

> *We've got friends at No. 1 because that was what we did at the time. So it was friends' parties that we were going to and … I wouldn't necessarily say peer pressure. I could go to a party and not drink and wouldn't feel any pressure but it was also cool to drink at the time. So not necessarily that I would be outcast if I didn't drink but I knew that it was cooler if I did.*

This pressure was evident to most of the participants. Josh, a 20 year old male in Geelong explained that peer pressure.

> A: Friends and peers, number one obviously.
>
> Q: How was that encouraging in terms of alcohol?
>
> A: Oh well everyone else was doing [it] so peer pressure and that kind of thing.
>
> Q: Did you ever feel pressured?
>
> A: Oh yeah, yeah. When everyone else was drinking and you don't want to drink and people are offering you drinks and going 'come on just have one, just one'. There's definitely pressure, yeah.

The status they gained from their peer group in school was important to them, as a 22 year old female, Brooke, in Geelong explained,

So Number 1 I've got friends… because we wouldn't drink on our own, it would only be as a status sort of thing among friends or that kind of thing and the stories for Monday and stuff like that.

Easy access to alcohol also ranked highly as a cultural driver of alcohol use with 72.2% of respondents ranking easy access to alcohol as one of the top 3 influences encouraging them and their friends to drink when they were under 18. They spoke about easy access to alcohol through older siblings, the influence of parents, their own and their friends' parents, easy access at bottle shops and the ease of using fake identification cards. Easy access was ranked in the top three things that encouraged 18-21 year olds to drink by 81.5% of respondents. Access was conflated with cost for over 18s, as participants thought that if they had the money to spend then they could easily access alcohol.

Reflecting on their experiences of being under 18, cheap drinks ranked in the top 3 for 58.8% of participants. Asuntha, a 24 year old female in Melbourne remembered how

…we used to get this thing called Passion Pop that was like $2.50 a bottle;

and Rick, a 21 year old male in Melbourne recalled the importance of cost:

We'd usually buy cheaper stuff. It didn't really matter how it tasted.

Price remained important as the participants reflected on getting older (see figure 1). Cheap drinks were ranked in the top 3 things encouraging 18-21 year olds to drink by 80.8% of respondents. And as participants thought about getting older they reflected on the other things in their lives they saw as competing for their limited income, such as travel. One way around the expense of alcohol was to follow drink specials when they went out, as Melanie, a 20 year old in Melbourne explained,

This place on Tuesday nights we go to the drinks are $4 all night….

In summary, the three main cultural drivers for participants were friends, easy access and cheap drinks. The other options listed in the question were important to participants to varying degrees but with less consistency than the top three drivers.

Interestingly, while they fairly easily reflected on what encouraged them to drink, many participants had a much more difficult time elaborating on things that discouraged their drinking. (See figure 2). For instance, after some time pausing to reflect, Sally, a 23 year old woman from Warrnambool said:

My gosh. I'd say 'other things' [discouraged me from drinking]. I don't think I'm an easily influenced person – I make my own decisions. So it's hard to say; I think if I don't drink it's my choice, it's because of how I'm feeling or what I've got going on at the time. I'm probably more influenced to drink rather than not to drink. If I don't want to drink, I just won't drink, it's as simple as that. But if my friends are, if we want to celebrate something we'll go and have a drink.
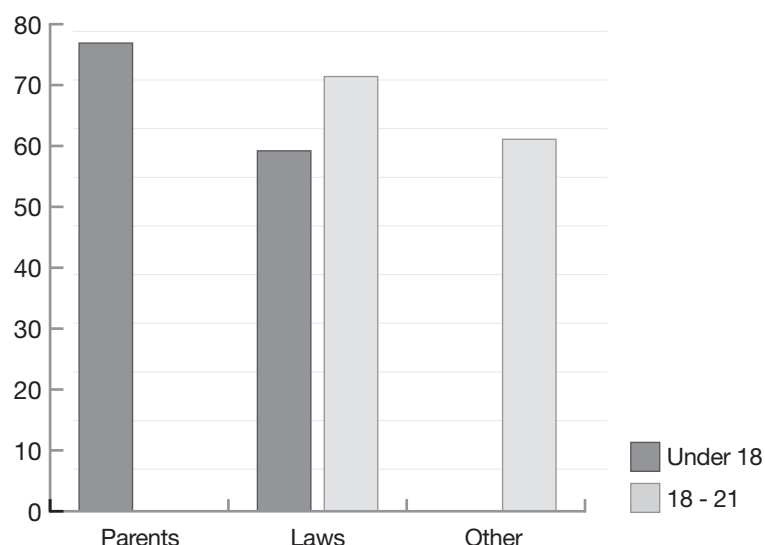
Figure 2: Deterrents - the top 3 things discouraging young people from drinking alcohol

Despite the hesitation and difficulty many of the participants had in thinking through what discouraged them, or deterred them from drinking, there was still a tendency for parents and laws to discourage participants. Other things on the list that they could choose from, other than Parents or Laws, such as cost and access, were of varying importance.

When reflecting about being under 18, parents were viewed as the most important deterrent, with 76.9% of respondents ranking their parents as one of the top three things discouraging them from drinking. Participants often said that their parents didn't actively encourage them to drink or not to but they felt there was an unspoken element of trust. Parents were also mentioned as a deterrent for over 18 year olds, particularly those still living at home, but their influence had, for most, greatly diminished.

59.2% of respondents said that the laws were in their top three things discouraging them from drinking when they were under 18. As participants thought about getting older, the importance of laws increased, with 71.4% of respondents putting it in their top three things that discouraged them from drinking during the ages 18-21. The laws that they spoke about for 18-21 were predominantly drink driving laws and the law seemed to matter more than other discouragements. For some participants, drink driving laws eclipsed underage drinking in importance. When thinking about the laws that may have dissuaded her from drinking when she was under 18, Melanie said,

> *Laws, that's funny [laughs]! Everyone forgets underage drinking's illegal."*

But even while we were talking about things that discouraged her from drinking when she was under 18, before she was able to drive, Cathy, a 21 year old female in Melbourne changed focus and talked about drink driving instead.

> *Catherine: Probably laws [would be number 1], like I would never ever drink and drive.*
>
> *Q: But not so much the under aged laws, because you were going to pubs and you weren't worried about that?*
>
> *Catherine: Oh no I had a fake ID, it didn't really matter.*
>
> *Q: Where did you get it?*
>
> *Catherine: A friend of mine… it usually worked… I didn't really mind about the under aged drinking, but the driving I would never do that.*

This illustrates how much more important the drink driving laws are to young people than the under age drinking laws, even though she was being asked to reflect on her experiences when she was under 18, when it came to laws, she immediately thought of drink driving.

While laws were important to participants when reflecting on their experiences 18-21, the "Other" category in the ranking was also very appealing to them, with 61.1% of respondents ranking "Other" in the top three things discouraging them from drinking when they were 18-21 (this wasn't an option for under 18s). Many participants spoke about the many responsibilities in their lives like study and work which often prevented them from drinking, or drinking too much. Melanie explains,

Work, study. … take all my mates for example. At the moment, lots of them aren't coming to Derby Day with us because they've all got exams and.…Like they, all of us are conscious of it. Well you know, they say they won't come out tonight because they need to study the next day.

The participants felt like they themselves, and their responsibilities, were the main things discouraging them from drinking. Jessica, a 20 year old woman living in Melbourne explained.

> Q: If you weren't having to drive would you probably drink?
>
> Jessica: I'd … see the only reason I wouldn't …drink a lot would be if I had, say, work the
>   next day at six am, if I had work just generally the next day early, but otherwise if
>   I'm not driving I would drink a lot.

Interestingly, one of the main deterrents described by the participants was themselves. They thought of themselves as largely in control and capable of regulating their own alcohol intake with careful consideration of their responsibilities.

By describing their 'drinking biographies' these young people illustrated that they considered themselves most encouraged to drink by their friendship groups. Using Harnett et al's (2001) model of drinking styles, these participants' alcohol use falls into the recreational, experimental and social styles, where drinking is done in part in order to manage and negotiate new relationships. As these participants transitioned from school to university and from university to full time work, they used alcohol not only for recreation, and pleasure, but also to negotiate new relationships in new settings. Mostly, they framed their drinking experiences in a positive light. Those that continue to drink did so for social reasons, finding that it made social interactions easier and more comfortable, making them more confident as a result.

While friends were the number one driver of drinking for all age groups, this social aspect of drinking needs to be further unpacked. Confidence emerged as an important theme. Nearly all of the participants spoke about social confidence saying that alcohol "loosened" them up or enabled them to talk or dance more freely and have fun in a way that they did not have when they were sober. These issues around the sociality of drinking and social confidence will be explored further in future analysis. The following section identifies key shifts in drinking patterns over time from the drinking biographies research.

Key Findings:

- The key drivers of alcohol consumption identified by young people in the biographies study were friendships, easy access to alcohol and cheap drinks.
- The key deterrents of alcohol consumption were parents and laws when they were underage. On turning 18 various laws were identified as the key deterrents.

Most of the participants in the biographies research began drinking while underage at secondary school. Teenage socialising under 18 was characterised by weekend house parties, cheap alcohol products (such as pre-mixed drinks and cask wine frequently referred to as 'goon') and easy access to alcohol either through parents or older siblings or using fake ID or passing as an older customer. On average participants indicated that they drank 2-3 times a month and 3-4 drinks in a session from age 16 onwards.

The years 18-21 often marked an increase in frequency of drinking and amount consumed. In addition to house parties and the frequent round of 18 and 21st birthdays, participants also attend pubs and clubs. Price was still a driver of consumption for many and those on lower incomes engaged in pre-drinking or consuming alcohol at home before they went out. On average participants indicated they drank 2-3 times a month but 5-6 drinks in a session.

Imagined future consumption in the short term (the next five years) was likely to remain similar for many of the participants. However most envisaged drinking less frequently and smaller amounts by the time they were middle aged. The imagined future involves drinking with dinner or the occasional celebration and a substantial reduction in drinking to intoxication.

Geographic location appeared to have an impact on drinking patterns although these findings should be read with caution because of our small sample size. Warnambool appeared to have a heavier drinking culture for under agers and those in their early 20s. For example in the peak drinking stage, 18-21 years old, participants from Warnambool drank on average 7-8 drinks per session, those from Melbourne drank 5-6 drinks and those from Geelong drank 3-4 drinks. The qualitative data suggest that fights were a more prominent feature of going out in Geelong than in the other locations although some suggested this had changed in recent years.

Gender has a substantial influence on drinking. There was a gendered sex/violence dichotomy in terms of the risks associated with drinking. Women expressed a vulnerability to sexual assault while out drinking whereas, for men, fights were of greater concern. Both men and women use self-regulating strategies to encourage safe drinking, being conscious of the risks of drinking too much in certain environments. A 21 year old man from Geelong, Matthew, explains:

> Q: Is that a usual thing, for there to be the threat of violence, when you're out around here? Would you sense that?
>
> Matthew: It depends on where you are. There's a couple of places that if you go, you know that something like that's going to happen…. It's, and it's more once you leave. There's very little that happens inside the club.
>
> Q: Oh okay, so it's outside the clubs?

Matthew: Someone's being, you know they get kicked out because they're drunk. They're walking to try and get into another place. If they don't get in, they get annoyed, someone will walk out and then it starts, so it's more on the streets. Well, down here [in Geelong] at least…Yeah [it's better to drink] where you can control the environment that you're in.

Many of the women are drinking as much as the men - by age 18-20 men and women are drinking the same amount, on average 5-6 drinks. However, there is a strong theme of women attempting to moderate drinking behaviour in the people they love – as partners, mothers or daughters.

University colleges were identified as settings encouraging heavy drinking. Consuming alcohol was central to social events hosted by colleges and alcohol was freely (or inexpensively) available. As Cheryl, a 23 year old from Warnambool, describes:

> Q: So were you living in college?
>
> Cheryl: I was living on res yeah. Like a big res with 40 other people. So it was action packed all the time.
>
> Q: Lots of alcohol?

Cheryl: Yeah lots and lots…It was huge. Oh… yeah I'll put two to three days a week I reckon. There was always a function on and then you'd feel bad for not going.… if you were in bed they'd knock and get you out. So you couldn't just have a quite night in because you'd hear everything.

> Q: And you were distracted by it…
>
> Cheryl: Yeah and so everyone would just go out, that was the thing to do.
>
> Q: Did you enjoy it?
>
> Cheryl: I enjoyed it but towards the end I hated it.

Overall the data provides a rich insight into initiation into a heavy drinking culture and the limited brakes available on excessive consumption. Most participants appear focused on the pleasures and fun of the present time of partying hard with the knowledge that they will have to moderate their consumption in the future. As Keith, a 20 year old man in Geelong says, 'It's my time to shine'. In many of the interviews the role of personal choice and responsibility is emphasized. In the next section we explore these themes further and examine the relevance of Australian drinking guidelines for young people in our study.

> **Key Findings:**
> ■ Heavy drinking is staged over the life course.
> ■ University colleges were identified as settings in which heavy drinking occurs.

3. Drinking Guidelines

In October 2007 the NH&MRC released draft guidelines for low-risk drinking superseding the previous guidelines released in 2001. The focus in these guidelines is on the reduction of accident or injury and development of alcohol related diseases and reduction in the lifetime risk of death from alcohol-related injury (2007:9). This is consistent with the harm minimization approach to health promotion that the guidelines are premised on. Young people in the 20-29 year age group are identified in this document as having the 'riskiest drinking profile' (2007: 34). The universal recommendation for low risk drinking is two standard drinks or less in any one day.

In the biographies research young people emphasise responsibility, meeting your obligations, not being a burden on others and not engaging in public displays of drunkenness of the type seen in media representations of young people and alcohol. Moderation is not a factor. Deborah Lupton points to the 'importance of order and control in the late modern sensibility' (1999: 136) and it is this need for control and their ability to know themselves and to know their limits that is paramount for these young drinkers. Steven, a 20 year old in Geelong explains:

> Q: Okay. So what if these guidelines referred to long-term health implications of
>   alcohol, not so much, you know, what's safe for you on the night?
>
> Steven: Those ones we also tend to ignore because I'm here for a good time, not a long
>   time.
>
> Q: Okay.
>
> Steven: Which is my mate's theory - I stole it from him - but it's also the point where I'm
>   very aware of all these implications. I'm aware that I'm killing my liver. I'm aware,
>   like I said, that I don't smoke because I didn't want to hurt my lungs, but I don't
>   use my liver for anything else. That's what it's there for. I know these things and I
>   take them into account, but if you shove information in my face, I will go, 'Yeah, I
>   know it. No, I don't care.

Similarly, Angie, a 24 year old woman in Geelong questions the perceived risks of drinking:

> *Not really. I kind of think that if I'm going to have a big night I'll have a big night, if that wrecks me it wrecks me. I kind of think I'm out there to have … I'm only going to live this life once so hopefully the damage that I'm creating now isn't going to hit me until I'm 70 so by then I'll have my super to pay for my hospital bills to get a new liver or something [laughter].*

Pat O'Malley points out that 'harms that exist only in the possible future must increasingly be governed as if they are actually occurring problems or 'objective risks' in the here and now'. There is an increasing imperative for us to devote more time to securing our future health so that in a sense 'the present is consumed and governed by the future' (2006: 170). As can be seen from the examples above this is problematic in young people who never quite believe they will grow old and in a consumer culture in which pleasure and gratification are to be experienced 'now' and the idea of delayed gratification is an anathema.

These quotes demonstrate that these young people have taken on the call to be responsible, rational, reasonable and independent. They talk of control, behaving in public, knowing themselves and their limits and being able to make decisions about alcohol within these limits. The pleasure young people pursue is immediate, enjoyable and exciting. In this process they could be said to exploit the contradictions in harm minimisation discourses with their emphasis on providing information to enable 'informed choice'. By only paying lip-service to pleasure and to the social and cultural worlds of young people and the sense they make of it, and instead emphasising scientific and medical expertise, the NH&MRC guidelines run the risk of being ignored or being seen as totally irrelevant to people's lives.

Key Findings:

- Rather than following guidelines and government proposed recommendations regarding alcohol intake, young people emphasise responsibility, meeting their obligations, not being a burden on others and not engaging in public displays of drunkenness of the type seen in media representations of young people and alcohol.

- The preoccupation of alcohol researchers and public health practitioners in accurately measuring alcohol consumption and defining standard drinks is not shared by the young people in these research projects.

C. Concluding Comments

The drinking biography interviews demonstrate the complex interaction of personal history with social context in alcohol consumption patterns. Young Australians must manage the social imperative to drink. For many this involves fun, pleasure and time-out from various responsibilities. The challenge for most is to negotiate the heavy drinking present successfully – to have their 'time to shine' and come to the future unscathed. In contrast to much of the media generated public anxiety about youth binge drinking the young people in this study do practice self-control. Most took their work and study commitments seriously and managed their drinking so it did not interfere with these commitments. There was a general assumption that they would be drinking less in the long term future. In particular, childrearing responsibilities were seen as a trigger to lowering consumption rather than other transitions such as fulltime work or entering relationships.

Ideas of responsibility and choice were emphasized in the drinking biographies but NHMRC draft guidelines were not seen as relevant or applicable to participants in this research. The rationale for the NHMRC guidelines is that once people get the information, they will act on it and change their behaviour. However this logic does not seem to operate for the participants in our research. Young people commonly linked their alcohol consumption to notions of socialising, fun and pleasure while they also spoke of the value of individual choice. A typical response was: 'Don't tell me what to do, it's my life, it's in my hands, let me do it and suffer the consequences.' This suggests that an authoritarian approach, such as the recommended guidelines, is unlikely to be effective as a health promotion measure.

Key Findings:

■ Alcohol consumption is a central feature of Australian culture and identity, particularly for young people.

■ Mostly, young people frame their drinking experiences in a positive light.

■ In contrast to the stereotypes of out of control youthful drinkers - many young people did talk about 'self-control' and made efforts to mange their drinking.

Chapter 3. Sporting Clubs Study

A. Background and Approach

Our research in sporting clubs was conducted against the following background. The relationship between alcohol consumption and sport is well established within Australian society. The misuse of alcohol, especially in the context of male team sports such as AFL, rugby and cricket, has been debated extensively, and continues to be a considerable source of social concern. While public attention to issues of alcohol abuse and sport are often focussed on the indiscretions of the sporting elite, concerns about alcohol abuse map directly on to community-based sporting club contexts (Burton, 1994; Snow & Munroe, 2000; Snow & Munroe, 2005). At a community level sporting clubs do much more than simply promote physical activity and connection. They also serve as social meeting places in which individuals develop a sense of communal values and mores. Here, be it in victory or defeat, alcohol consumption is very much a part of the sporting landscape. Through their involvement in sporting clubs, many young people are exposed to alcohol consumption as a normal part of their cultural experience. Some research has indicated that 30% of 13-17 year olds had participated in unsupervised drinking at a sports club (ADF, 2002), and that over a quarter of 18-30 year olds drank at levels that risk short-term harm on every drinking occasion at their club. Importantly, levels of alcohol consumption for young males and females are higher in sporting clubs than national averages (Duff, Scealy & Rowland, 2004).

At a time where there is considerable social anxiety about an increasing disconnection of young people from their communities, there is a heightened emphasis being placed on the potential of community-based sporting clubs to provide spaces for social inclusion. Amid the perceived (postmodern) demise of schools, families and religion, as institutions responsible for building connections with young people, community sporting clubs are increasingly being identified as sites for potentially (re)building connection between young people and their communities. Indeed, a National survey of young people's activities outside of school revealed that over 64% of 11-24 year olds were involved in community based sport (Mission Australia 2005). Coupled with the revelation that over 87% of 11-24 year olds rank their friends as the most important source of support and guidance, there is clearly a warrant to better understand the nexus between sporting clubs, peers and alcohol consumption patterns.

Of course, this is not to say that all alcohol consumption in the context of sporting clubs has been shown to be risky or reckless. In recent times considerable steps have been made, through programs such as the Good Sports Accreditation Program (ADF 2002), to promote responsible serving and consumption of alcohol in sporting clubs. To this end, community sports clubs are regarded by public health professionals as settings which offer an opportunity to address entrenched patterns of high risk drinking (Clarkson et al., 2002; Duff, 2002; Munro, 2000). Where most recent efforts towards this end have targeted policy and regulation in the pursuit of these ends, relatively little is known about the cultural drivers of (low risk, risky and high risk) alcohol consumption that are cultivated and perpetuated through community based sporting clubs.

To understand what drives and shapes people's drinking behaviours is a timely pursuit amongst contemporary concerns about the level of alcohol misuse and the social consequences across Australian communities. Given that sport and alcohol have been strongly linked in Australian culture the sporting clubs study aimed to gain insights into the place of alcohol in the ways young people establish and practice their identity within a community sporting club culture.

Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) national policy manager Geoff Munro claims that elite level sports and their administrators lag behind community level sports clubs and organisations that have 'shown the way' in developing 'sensible', 'responsible' management practices in relation to the use, sale and consumption of alcohol in club contexts. Much of this change, it is suggested, has occurred under the auspices of the ADF's own intervention strategy Good Sports (Baum and Stevenson 2008). A detailed history, discussion, or analysis of Good Sports is beyond the scope of this report, though the ADF's framing of the problem of sporting clubs and alcohol is instructive:

> *Alcohol and sport are historically closely linked in Australia. Most major sporting competitions and teams promote and advertise alcohol consumption and many sports clubs have a tradition of heavy drinking. A large number of clubs depend on revenue from alcohol to finance club activities.*
>
> *The Good Sports program is an initiative of the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) to develop safer and healthier communities. The program helps sporting clubs manage alcohol responsibly and reduce alcohol related problems such as binge and underage drinking. Displaying the Good*

Sports logo sends an important message to club members and the community. It confirms that the club promotes a responsible attitude towards alcohol and that it provides a safe environment for players, members, families and supporters.

Evidence is growing which demonstrates that community-based sports clubs contribute to alcohol problems by accepting and promoting excessive drinking and providing inappropriate role models for young people.

Good Sports (2008a) About Us, http://www.goodsports.com.au/

Sports clubs, the ways in which alcohol is used in these contexts, and the ways in which alcohol practices in these spaces influence and shape young people's understandings of alcohol, have been a cause of concern for a number of years. The tendency here is to imagine sports clubs as spaces in which alcohol plays a significant and problematic role:

- Clubs are often imagined as having an unhealthy dependency on alcohol for income/revenue streams;
- Alcohol is understood as playing an essential and a major part in victories and defeats, celebrations and drowning your sorrows;
- Binge drinking, getting drunk, and the irresponsible use of alcohol are understood a being part and parcel of the ways in which alcohol is used in clubs;
- Alcohol practices are often imagined as a key element or characteristic of a club's culture; and culture (an amorphous concept) is seen as an apparently identifiable array of assumptions, values and artefacts/practices which define a club in its own eyes and in the eyes of the community.

Interventions such as the ADF's Good Sports program make sense, appear as a reasoned, rational, appropriate, strategic and effective intervention in relation to these ways of framing the relations between sports clubs, alcohol practices and young people.

Our concern is that the ADF brings to any discussion of these issues a pre-existing set of assumptions that, when mobilised in media commentary, policy discussions or research agendas, construct the problem of sports clubs, alcohol and young people in particular, pre-determined ways. In bracketing out other ways of imagining this problem a range of other possibilities are excluded. The overall effect is to simplify what are, arguably, more complex relationships: relationships that are produced by, and produce their own, tensions, contradictions, possibilities and limitations.

We did not bring these sorts of pre-determined, pre-existing assumptions to our research. We may have had our own but we have determined to reflexively engage with these and to deliberately explore assumptions, thoughts, and ideas that we bought to our research in sporting clubs. Some of these assumptions have included the following:

- We have imagined clubs as hubs or nodes that are located in complex networks that are shaped by, and shape, things such as the following:
  - geography, social class, ethnicity and demography;
  - social, cultural, economic and technological changes that transform economic activities in localities, family structures and relations, work and consumption practices, leisure and entertainment activities;
  - individual and community perceptions and expectations;
  - the ways in which governments and their agencies imagine and respond to a variety of issues/problems affecting, or caused by, different populations;
- Clubs have histories: reputations, perceptions, practices, policies, cultures can appear as unchanging, but they can also change;
- Change is often planned, but its consequences can be foreseen and unforeseen;

- Drivers of change can be diverse and might be seen as being internal or external to the Club – though these boundaries can be fuzzy;

- It is possible to identify and analyse actors/agents (human and non human) that are influential in provoking and promoting change processes;

- A club's history, practices and cultures can be significant in shaping the roles that alcohol plays in club spaces, and, in turn, in young people's experiences in these spaces;

- However, these relationships are complex, are themselves shaped by a range of factors. The consequences and outcomes of these relationships are not pre-ordained, and analyses of them should not proceed from a pre-determined position;

- Often it is adults in leadership roles in these clubs who are well placed to reflect on these histories, processes of change and the consequences of change;

- The adults in these positions often struggle – as many adults as parents do – with the tensions, dilemmas and issues related to young people, alcohol, risk, harm and how to minimise it. In addition, those in leadership roles also have to notice, account for and manage community perceptions, regulatory obligations and club viability.

- Importantly, processes, practices – even culture – can be significantly shaped by one or two key leaders within the organisation.

This framework enables us to develop accounts that do not rely on a pre-determined starting point, or a pre-determined end point as we try to make sense of, and represent the complexities of the roles that sporting clubs play in shaping young people's uses of alcohol.

1. Research ethics

The Research Team understood the ethical complexities of this study and maintained close adherence to the ethics guidelines monitored by Deakin University. Alcohol consumption is a sensitive issue, particularly when young people, under legal age, are involved. While it was not a particular goal of the research there was a high probability that participants would volunteer information about their alcohol consumption patterns during the course of the study. Adherence to consent procedures and provision of anonymity for both individuals and clubs was integral to the collection of data, and remains significant in reporting and all subsequent write-ups.

It is understood by the researchers that the transparency and openness offered by individuals and clubs with relation to the challenges of managing a community based sporting club was provided with the understanding that they would remain unidentified and that any details that would give rise to their identification would not be used in print.

2. Recruitment Strategies

Clubs were randomly selected from a range of sources including club lists via local government online club directories; state sporting organisation club contact lists and the Regional Sports Assembly club directories. Clubs were then recruited via a direct telephone approach to the club president or, in some cases, the club secretary. Initial contact explained the aims of the study, the data collection methods, and level of club member support needed. Noteworthy, and surprising to the research team, was the willingness and levels of enthusiasm of clubs to support this work, with only three out of 14 clubs contacted declining to be involved. In anticipation that there would be reluctance by club committees to participate (for fear of judgment or excessive drain on resources), a $300 equipment voucher was offered to clubs that agreed to participate in the study. This was not deemed as the motivation for involvement and was more often introduced after the club had indicated interested.

Participating clubs explained that their motivations to be involved were the following: to learn about young peoples' perceptions of the club; to find out what other clubs were doing regarding strategies for the responsible management of alcohol; they felt it was an important issue for young people broadly and wanted to contribute to better understanding the role of alcohol in sporting clubs in general. Some of the reasons given for not participating were: timing, that is, that is was too close to the end of the season, that volunteer time was already being too stretched to take on another thing; and a general lack of interest in the research.

3. Sample

Using a qualitative framework, the study aimed to look closely at clubs located across a range of social contexts. Geographic location, socio economic status and ethnic background were all considered important and we aimed to have a representation of a range of sports with different gender orientations. 11 clubs participated in our study, with seven different sports represented. Included in our sample were the following clubs: cricket (2), football (2), soccer (1), hockey (2), netball (2), surf lifesaving (1), and tennis (1). We had four rural, four regional and three metro clubs.

Once *in principle* support was issued by the club contact, a plain language statement identifying the aims, interview details and project ethics, was provided along with samples of consent letters. It was requested that this information be presented at a Committee meeting to gain the consent of the whole organisation, and support for the project, prior to commencing data collection. Significant to the process was the ethical requirement of parental consent to speak to players under 18. This, more often than not, resulted in repeated visits to the site to meet with players who did not initially produce their completed consent paperwork. Data collection commenced in the following order.

First, clubs were issued with a Club Information Pro-forma. This document elicited background information about the clubs. With this document we inquired about the club size, breakdown of the membership, details relating to the Committee structure, the liquor license, weekly and annual social events and associated bar sales, the value placed on alcohol, both financial and social, details of policies and strategies in place and, finally, any concerns they had relating to alcohol management.

Club leader interviews were then conducted (n=29). Individual face to face interviews (though in a few cases, interviews were conducted in pairs) of approximately one hour duration were conducted with up to three club leaders at each site. Through these interviews we aimed to establish how the leaders perceived club culture, both in the past and the present. We also elicited details of their alcohol management strategies and compliance, the clubs' role as a social hub and their understanding of the associated responsibilities.

Following the club leader interviews, player Questionnaires were distributed. Prior to interview, each player completed a tick and rank questionnaire which asked questions about themselves including their personal details, employment details, their involvement with the club and their perceptions about alcohol and its place in the club. This questionnaire also sought to establish their thoughts relating to exposure, pressure and the relationships between major celebrations and alcohol consumption.

All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. The combination of written information from the questionnaires and pro-formas, and the transcribed interviews provided the research team with a rich source of data from which common themes could be identified.

With the assistance of club leaders and volunteers, a series of interviews were organized at each site with young people, including males and females between 14-24 years (n=136). These were conducted over a 40-60 minute period in small groups (two or three participants) or individually. Player interview characteristics are presented in Table 1.

	Male U'18	Male 18-24	Female U '18	Female 18-24	Total by location
Rural	13	14	110	8	**45**
Region	15	17	6	6	**44**
Metro	5	19	8	15	**47**
Total (by age)	**33**	**50**	**24**	**29**	**136**

Table 1: Sporting clubs player interviews

B. Findings

A number of recurring themes emerged across the data set. The social aspect of club sports plays a significant role in attracting players and volunteers and the club plays an important role in the overall social life of the people interviewed. We found that clubs are more than just places to play sport. They are community hubs wherein a range of people, including non-players, come together socially. Secondly, we found that clubs implement a range of strategies to create environments that recognise and capitalise on their role as community hubs eg "creating family-friendly environments." Club leadership was found to have an important impact on club culture and the consequent capacity to undertake cultural change. Young people believed that their club played little role in their exposure to alcohol consumption, they cited home, school friends, house parties as far more significant influences in this social domain. We found that clubs are highly attuned to their social and regulatory responsibilities around the serving of alcohol. We elaborate on these themes below.

1. The Social Aspect of Sport

For volunteers and players alike, '**meeting people**' and '**being with friends**' were ranked as prominent aspects of being part of a club.

Notable across the sites was the value placed on the club as a significant part of the social life of the club leaders and volunteers. The volunteer commitment needed to run a club required some club officials to spend a great deal of their time within club walls. It was the social side, the sense of family, being with friends and socializing that presented as the most significant attraction for volunteers. This may account for the belief by the young people who were interviewed, that it is the "older crew, the non-players" that drink the most at the club.

> *It's the biggest part of my social life, yeah. We have meals every Thursday night. My wife is heavily involved in the club. She cooks the meals and runs the canteen, so it's a family affair. My three boys have all played here - one of them is still playing here. The others can't because of work. But one of them still plays here, my son-in-law plays here, so yeah much a family place for us. And I'll have a little grand daughter in a few months time and I hope she'll play netball up here.*
>
> Regional Football Club President

> *This is my second family, and that is definitely the way that I view it. I guess when you spend a lot of time at a club and you grow up with people, they do become your second family, and this is my home away from home, unfortunately.*
>
> Regional Netball President

> *We have a huge volunteer base, a large social base as well so it's more like an extension of your family down there. The mateship that we have with club members there; at our wedding half the room was club members that you not only see at hockey but we also socialise with outside of hockey as well so we've made it very much a central part of our life.*
>
> Committee Member, Metro Hockey Club

> *I enjoy the club. I take pride in what's been achieved since I've been the chairman. I know basically everybody in the club. So socially for me it's my major social outlet. It would be the bulk of it, yes.*
>
> Hockey Club President

> *You know, it would be a green world if we could all come here and relax without the alcohol side. But to a lot of them, particularly the older blokes who are sort of past their playing days, it's their huge social outlet. They come here on a Tuesday and Thursday night and they stand outside on the hill with a beer each watching the guys train and in a way I think that's a good thing because my experience with older men is that they don't tend to socialise like that very well.*
>
> Rural Netball Club Official (said of the football club)

For the players, the 'social' was not isolated to activities in the clubhouse but included seeing friends at training, playing in the same team as your friends and meeting new people. Given that players were at the club, on average, three times per week, it is not surprising that the club was reported as a significant part of their overall social life. However, overall, the use of the bar facilities during the week by players was not as common as that of non-playing affiliates.

> **Key Finding:**
> - We found that sports clubs are more than just places to play sport. They are community hubs.

2. The Club as a Family Friendly Place

Clubs across the board were proud of their role as places where people come together, as individuals and families. A large proportion of the young people we interviewed, regardless of class, culture or geography, acknowledged that they had other family members involved in the club and viewed this connection as valuable. All of the clubs, to greater and lesser extents, were working to increase club-family connections through the provision of social activities that did not involve sports participation. Interestingly, increased family involvement (wittingly or not) was seen to have had a number of impacts on alcohol management and use at the clubs. One important aspect was that being known around the club was often cited by the 17-24 age group as having a self-moderating influence on their behaviour around the club.

This family friendly environment made the club a comfortable place to socialize and have a drink and therefore was regularly regarded by the participants as *safe*, because, as one participant said, "***people are looking out for you.***"

The limited or measured serving of alcohol to under-age people (namely 17 year olds) became a grey area where parent presence at the club seemingly complicated issues of consent and consumption. Where BYO functions were part of the club social-mix (celebrations, events and functions), the amount of alcohol made available to under-age drinkers was viewed as irresponsible and problematic for number of club officials.

> *The footy club is very oriented towards supporting people, giving people more opportunity, family orientation, positive activities. One example is there's a great little playground that's been built right next to the netball courts. So the club up here spent a lot of time getting a grant to upgrade the netball courts and another one to get a decent playground close to it. So what that enables is the opportunity for a family to come along with small children, one of the kids can play netball, maybe Mum to umpire, Dad to look after the kids on the swings for a while nearby and then interchange, one of them then goes over to the footy club, Mum might be a strapper or a helper over there or one of the team managers, Dad might be the coach or whatever and the little kids have still got someone else to play with another family that's also there for the same reason so to me that's what a quality club looks like. Whereas there are other clubs around who would probably more highly value having a premiership than they would having a playground.*
> Local Government Representative Speaking about the Rural Football Club
>
> *Well, I would have a beer at a pub in Melbourne under-age, but not at the club, just purely because everyone knows you and I don't want to be seen as an under-age larrikin.*
> Rural Football Club – Male 17 years
>
> *I would rather come here, have a few drinks and go home than go into town or anything like that, because there's too many idiots out there. I always know that I'm in a safe environment here. There's always someone looking out for you, and so this is just where I prefer to come.*
> Regional Netball Club President

3. Club Leadership

Throughout our journey of getting to know the participating clubs - how they operate, why they operate in certain ways, and how club culture is determined - leadership was identified as a critical element in shaping the attitudes and practices of its members. Clubs were not seen as having fixed cultures, but rather as possessing different cultures and different phases of their history. Numerous references were made to clubs having strategically shifted their culture through leadership change. We found that strong and informed leadership clearly offers clubs the potential to operate as change agents around the consumption of alcohol.

Through our discussions with and about club leaders, a number of salient features emerged.

First we found that club administrators had a sound knowledge of, and placed great emphasis on, their responsibilities relating to responsible serving and management of alcohol and that they believed training, education and surveillance around alcohol consumption were important dimensions of a responsible club practice. Club leaders were important in defining and shaping responsible attitudes and practices around the consumption of alcohol. Developing a positive, responsible and respectful culture is integral to the pursuit of membership growth.

The previous President was only interested in success on the field for the senior football team which left the rest of the club divided. Since NAME came on board, he has changed the attitude from the senior footballers being the most important to everybody's equal, even under 12 netballers. And that has been an enormous change that has taken a long time, but it was one that had to happen for this club to survive because everybody needs to feel that they're important, not just the pinnacles of the football. The most notable thing about the change for me is that we have more players that we know what to do with, typically juniors and there is much more family involvement which has a different feel.

Rural Netball President

We took a quantum leap in that we relocated our club, built brand new facilities and obviously that enticed a number of people but it also changed a lot of attitudes as well in terms of we're not just a little sporting club we're bigger than that. Running those facilities bestows upon everybody a lot more responsibility than what there was previously so there's been a big culture change. And at the same time we rebuilt the women's section, rebuilt the junior section and got a whole lot more people coming through the club. One of the key things is that you've got to have really good leaders within your club. So that means your Board and the leaders of each section need to be highly organized and working towards the same vision.

Metro Hockey Club

I think through some changes made by the club just to try and clean it up and rid itself of people we didn't really want around the club, which was a bold move when you're struggling to put a team on the field, that was some real positives I saw from the administration. Within the next two to three years we actually – our player numbers grew and hopefully that's just because we changed the culture a little bit. We moved our venue up here to the footy club and I think that also brought a – just a different mindset about the club.

Rural Cricket President

The major change is this. We open up to different nationalities, that's the biggest thing. At the beginning it was 98% Greek background. But lately all are welcome, could be Italians, Turks, Yugoslavs, Croats, everywhere, right through the junior rank, we've got so many youngster, we've got 13 junior teams plus two girls teams plus senior sides and we do have all nationalities in there, or I should say born Australia but from a different background. The door's open for any person that wants to come. Nationality, size, weight; it doesn't make a difference to us – that's our rule.

President Metropolitan Soccer Club

Key Findings:
- Club leadership has an important impact on club culture and the consequent capacity to undertake cultural change.

---

4. The Club as a Space for Exposure to Heavy Alcohol Consumption: Significant but not Primary.

Despite the fact that most of the young people interviewed revealed that they regularly see people drinking alcohol around the club, this seemingly had little impact as a cultural driver on their own understandings and uses of alcohol. When questioned about the impact of this exposure the overwhelming majority (94%) either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' that it was influential to their attitudes and practices. When further questioned, this was explained with relation to two factors. First, by the time they were able to drink legally at the club young people were already drinking at other places. Secondly, other social events such as parties with social connections outside of the sporting club, such as school friends and families at home, were cited as more influential sources to alcohol exposure.

Our interview data supported a number of patterns relating to young people and early alcohol consumption. Foremost among our findings is a consistency with the reported age of initiation to alcohol being around 15.5 years (National Drug Strategy Household Survey, 2004) and the most common sites of initial alcohol consumption being in private homes, at parties and in (unsupervised) public spaces with friends (King et al., 2005a; White and Hayman, 2006).

Nonetheless, the understanding that 'under-age youth are drinking' raised some interesting dilemmas for clubs. For a number of parents interviewed in the date set, clubs were considered preferable places for under-age young people to drink. This was not viewed as an endorsement of the practice as much as a it was a way of minimizing the risk of harm.

Certainly I know that a lot of kids choose to drink, kids in the underage group, drinking in places that are away from the light, like in the park or other kids houses when parents are or may not be at home. My fear is that they're not doing it in a safe environment. So the potential for harm if they drink too much and start doing silly things, like stunts and things or borrowing cars. If you combine those things without any form of supervision that might moderate it in some way, then you end up with kids wrapping themselves around trees or choking on their own vomit and no-one knowing about it

Parent, Volunteer Football Club

5. Club Strategies Relating to Alcohol Management

In collecting information from club officials and players a number of pro-active strategies to promote responsible alcohol practices at both the club and individual level have been adopted. Although not exhaustive, the following list reveals some of the key strategies that were used by these clubs. Clubs found that their participation in the Good Sports Program—an accreditation program established by the Australian Drug Foundation to lead clubs through policy development and implementation of 'good'

alcohol practice—was useful. Six out of the 11 clubs were part of this accreditation program. Also deemed important by the club was the appointment of a designated (trained) manager of the bar facility. Likewise, participation in Responsible Serving of Alcohol Courses by club personnel and policies which only allow those trained to serve from the bar were found helpful in negotiating alcohol use in the club. Finally, knowing 'who is who' around the club and actively monitoring the consumption of individual members, particularly under-age, was considered an important strategy for these clubs.

Club management suggested that communication to all members and officials about club expectations with relation to alcohol consumption is a helpful strategy. Rules and regulations which enforce responsible sentiments were considered important as well. These regulations included such things as the following:

- short bar opening sessions to minimize excessive drinking;
- early bar closure;
- the serving of food and non-alcoholic refreshments, paired with established drink limits;
- distancing alcohol from junior time slots and junior social activities;
- prohibiting juniors from entering the bar area (where division is possible through clubhouse design);
- identifying under-age members at social functions held outside of the club by issuing different coloured wrist bands (entry tickets);
- moving away from 'all you can drink for your entry fee' style functions and:
- providing free soft-drink offers for designated drivers.

What we do when we have functions, we have two guys or two girls stand at the door and everybody has to produce their [proof of] age. My wife generally does a good job, that's a pretty hard taskmaster, so she's there and makes everybody produce proof of age and then they get a stamp. We have a stamp and if the bar have got a question they produce a stamp. And that's worked well for us. We're also big on bus cabs at no expense to the patrons. They can come to the bar, we get the cab for them, that's our club expense. And at the end of the day you might spend $20 on phone calls one night, that might happen three times a year, so it's insignificant and you know they're getting home safe. We also if there's a designated driver they go to the bar they get a drink card, they can go over and say look I'm a designated driver and they get four drink cards to buy soft drink or water.

Regional Football Club, President.

> **Key Findings:**
> - Clubs are highly attuned to their social and regulatory responsibilities around the serving of alcohol.

6. Concluding Comments

Our detailed qualitative investigation of sporting clubs enabled us to explore the connections between clubs, the wider community and dynamic drinking cultures. Many of the clubs had created a family friendly atmosphere for cross generational socialising and safe drinking practices. Young people monitored their drinking in club settings choosing to drink heavily in other locations. Our rich data reveals the complexities, tensions and possibilities for promoting low risk drinking among young people.

> **Key Findings:**
> - We have identified highly complex relationships between young people, their families, peers and various contexts—including sporting clubs—that shape their understandings and uses of alcohol.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

Various aspects of young people's use of alcohol will, quite rightly, continue to be a concern for different levels of government, drug and alcohol professionals, health and education professionals, policing and justice professionals, the alcohol industry, and research organisations.

Our research indicates that these concerns are also likely to be shared by adults in positions of authority in settings such as community based sporting clubs. Many of these adults are parents themselves, and in common with other parents they have concerns and uncertainties about young people's use of alcohol, and the consequences of what some have called *low*, *medium* and *high risk* use of alcohol by young people.

Our research also indicates that many young people themselves have concerns – even share adult concerns - about the roles that alcohol plays in their lives and the lives of their friends and peers. The young people whose voices frame the identification of the themes that we have presented in this report suggest that alcohol – its uses, the relationships and settings in which it is used, and which shape the nature of its use are sometimes problematic for them. At the same time alcohol is understood by many of these young people as central to their social lives and as something that promotes confidence, pleasure, enjoyment, intense and valued personal relationships, and good times. At these times various institutional and adult concerns about so-called binge-drinking, recommended levels of drinking, and the claimed adverse long term consequences of alcohol use appear not to engage these young people, or to be recognised by them.

In summary, the rich, detailed data generated by the qualitative methods and analysis employed in this project point to the complex, sometimes contradictory, often problematic, but, also, often pleasurable roles that shape young people's use of alcohol, and the variety of cultural drivers of this use.

In this context we offer the following recommendations in relation to possible future research; and to the ways in which health promotion programs, policing and justice systems, alcohol and drug professionals, education systems, government departments and industry bodies understand the cultural drivers of young people's alcohol use:

1. Young people's use of alcohol and the ways that they understand, think and talk about alcohol often mirror or appear as similar to adult concerns. But they often have very different views to adults. Adult organisations, institutions, policy processes and systems should develop and deploy research, evaluation, and consultation processes that enable the diversity of young people's voices, and the tensions, contradictions and pleasures that shape these voices, to be included in debates about, and responses to, the 'problem' of young people's alcohol use.

2. The development, deployment and evaluation of policies, programs and interventions should account for the contradictory, problematic, and often pleasurable drivers and consequences of young people's use of alcohol.

3. If young people are to recognise themselves, their friends, and the things that are important in their lives in these policies, programs and interventions then they need to be addressed or engaged in ways that recognise the complexities that this research has identified.

Auerbach, K. and L. Collins (2006). "A multidimensional developmental model of alcohol use during emerging adulthood." J**ournal of Studies on Alcohol 67**: 917-925.

Australian Drug Foundations (ADF) (2002) Good sports accreditation program.

Burton Nelson, M. (1994) The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football, New York; Harcourt Brace & Company

Carroll (2002) The role of social marketing in preventing harm associated with teenage drinking. In Proceedings from the 2nd International Conference for Drugs and Young People. http://www.adf.org. au/cyds/papers.html. (Accessed: 24/6/2004).

Castells, M (1996) The Rise of the Network Society, (London, Blackwells).

Casswell, S., M. Pledger, et al. (2002). "Trajectories of drinking from 18-26 years: identification and prediction." **Addiction 97**: 1427-1437.

Chatterton, P., & Hollands, R. (2001). Changing our 'Toon': Youth, nightlife and urban change in Newcastle. Newcastle Upon Tyne: University of Newcastle

Clarkson, J., Giles-Corti, B., Donovan, R. & Frizzell, S. (2002) Play hard drink safe: A pilot project to promote responsible alcohol consumption in sporting clubs in Western Australia. **Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 13**: 226-231.

Coleman, L. and S. Cater (2005). "Underage 'binge' drinking: A qualitative study into motivations and outcomes." **Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy 12**(2): 125-136.

Duff, C. (2002). Evaluation of the Good Sports Accreditation Program in Victoria. Melbourne: Australian Drug Foundation.

Duff, C., Scealy, M. & Rowland, B. (2004) The culture and context of alcohol use in community sporting clubs in Australia: Research into 'attitudes and behaviour'. **Centre for Youth Drug Studies, Australian Drug Foundation**.

Eng, P., I. Kawachi, et al. (2005). "Effects of marital transitions on changes in dietary and other behaviours in US male health professionals."

Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health 59: 56-62.

Giddens, A. (1990) The Consequences of Modernity, (Stanford, Stanford University Press).

Hacking, I. (1991), 'How should we do the history of statistics?' in G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller (eds.), **Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality**, London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 181-96.

Harnett, R., B. Thom, et al. (2000). "Alcohol in transition: Towards a model of young men's drinking styles." **Journal of Youth Studies 3**(1): 61-77.

Harrison L. (2000) Gender relations and the production of difference in sexuality education in Australia. **Gender and Education**. Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 5-20.

Kelly, P. (2000a) The Dangerousness of Youth-at-Risk: The possibilities of surveillance and intervention in uncertain times. Journal of Adolescence, Special Issue; **Adolescents and Risk-Taking. 23**, 463-476.

Kelly, P. (2000b) Youth as an Artefact of Expertise: Problematising the Practise of Youth Studies, **Journal of Youth Studies 3**(3), pp.301-315.

Kelly, P. (2001a) The Post Welfare State and the Government of Youth at-risk. Special Issue of Social Justice. **'The Impact of Welfare Reform' 28(4)**, 96-113.

Kelly, P. (2001b) Youth at Risk: Processes of Responsibilization and Individualization in the Risk Society. Discourse. 22(1), 23 -34.

Kelly, P. (2003) Growing Up as Risky Business? Risks, Surveillance and the Institutionalised Mistrust of Youth. **Journal of Youth Studies 6**(2), 165-180.

Lash, S. & Urry, J. (1994) Economies of Signs and Space, (London, Sage).

Lindsay, J. (2001). "Sex, drugs and drinking: health risks in the social lives of young workers." **Youth Studies Australia 20**(4): 11-19.

Lindsay, J. (2003). 'Partying hard', 'partying sometimes' or 'shopping': Young workers' socializing patterns and sexual, alcohol and illicit drug risk taking. **Critical Public Health 13**(1):1-14.

Lindsay, J. (2004). Gender and class in the lives of young hairdressers: from serious to spectacular. **Journal of Youth Studies 7**(3):259-277.

Lindsay, J. (2005). Drinking in Melbourne pubs and clubs: A study of alcohol consumption contexts. Clayton: School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University.

Lindsay, J. (2006). "A big night out in Melbourne: Drinking as an enactment of class and gender." **Contemporary Drug Problems 33**(1): 29-61.

Lofland, J. and L. Lofland (1984). **Analysing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis**. Belmont CA, Wadsworth.

Lupton, D. (1999), **Risk**, London: Routledge.

McMorris, B. J. and C. Uggen (2000). "Alcohol and employment in the transition to adulthood." **Journal of Health and Social Behavior 41**(3): 276-294.

Massey, D. (1994) **Space, Place and Gender**, (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Miles, M. B. and A. M. Huberman (1994). **Qualitative Data Analysis**. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Mission Australia (2005) National Youth survey 2005: Key and emerging issues. Mission Australia.

Munro, G. (2000) Challenging the culture of sport and alcohol. **International Journal of Drug Policy, 11**: 199-202.

Munro, G. (2003) School-based drug education: Realistic aims or certain failure. Centre for Youth Drug Studies. http://www.adf.org.au/cyds/papers/sded.htm. (Accessed: 6/6/2004).

National Health and Medical Research Council NHMRC (2001). Australian alcohol guidelines: health risks and benefits. Canberra, National Health and Medical Research Council, Commonwealth Government of Australia.

National Health & Medical Research Council NHMRC, Australian alcohol guidelines for low-risk drinking, Draft for consultation, October 2007.

O'Malley, P. (2006), **Risk, Uncertainty and Government**, Routledge-Cavendish: Oxon.

Proudfoot, H., & Teeson, M. (2002). Who seeks treatment for alcohol dependence? Findings form the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. **Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology 37**(10):451-456.

Raskin White, H., B. McMorris, et al. (2006). "Increases in alcohol and marijuana use during the transition out of high school into emerging adulthood: The effects of leaving home, going to college, and high school protective factors." **Journal of Studies on Alcohol 67**: 810-822.

Roche, A., P. Bywood, et al. (2008). **Young people and alcohol: The role of cultural influences**. Adelaide, Drinkwise Australia.

Snow, P. & Munro, G. (2000). Alcohol consumption in amateur Australian football clubs: Evidence from a rural region. **Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 10**: 237-243.

Snow, P. & Munroe, G. (2005) Alcohol (mis)use in metropolitan amateur football clubs. **Healthy Lifestyles Journal, 53**(1): 7-11.

Lyn Harrison

Harrison, Lyn (2008) "I don"t think putting a number on it would stop me": Drinking guidelines and the government of pleasure *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference* Presentation. University of Melbourne, 2-5 December.

Northern Daily Leader   05/12/2008
Page: 17
General News
Region: Tamworth NSW
Circulation: 8292
Type: Regional

"*Guidelines irrelevant' to young*" THE emerging culture of binge drinking by young Australians won't be fixed by pointing them to official alcohol consumption guidelines, new research shows. *The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)* guidelines, which give recommendations on how many standard drinks should be consumed in a day, were viewed as "*irrelevant*", said Dr Lyn Harrison of Deakin University. "*The rationale for these guidelines is that once people get the information, they will act on it and change their behaviour," she said. "Yet the data from the young people in our study, shows that this is not necessarily the case*" Sixty young Victorian drinkers - 20 each from Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool - were quizzed for their views on their alcohol intake and it included the relevancy of the *NHMRC* guidelines. Dr Harrison said young people aged 20 to 24, with an equal split between men and women, commonly linked their alcohol consumption to notions of socialising, fun and pleasure while they also spoke of the value of individual choice. A typical response was: "*Don't tell me what to do, it's my life, it's in my hands, let me do it and suffer the consequences*" "*This culture is at odds with the authoritarian, top-down approach to things - like the NHMRC guidelines. "You also have to ask how many people, not just young people, go out and have only two standard drinks.*" Dr Harrison also said many young people believed they unfairly faced a negative stereotype in relation to youth drunkenness, when many felt they made sensible choices about alcohol. The survey was part of a wider research project and funded by Drinkwise Australia.

Maitland Mercury   04/12/2008
Page: 7
General News
Region: Maitland NSW
Circulation: 4463
Type: Regional

Alcohol intake guidelines "*irrelevant*" to young: survey The emerging culture of binge drinking by young Australians won't be fixed by pointing them to official alcohol consumption guidelines, new research shows. The *National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)* guidelines, which give recommendations on how many standard drinks should be consumed in a day, were viewed as irrelevant, Dr Lyn Harrison of Deakin University said. "*The rationale for these guidelines is that once people get the information, they will act on it and change their behaviour,*" she said. "*Yet the data from the young people in our study, shows that this is not necessarily the case.*" The *NHMRC* guidelines state that males should consume an average of no more than four standard drinks a day, while for women it is two standard drinks. Everyone is urged to have one or two alcohol free days per week.

Daily Advertiser   04/12/2008
Page: 10
General News
Region: Wagga Wagga NSW
Circulation: 13517
Type: Regional

Binge guidelines irrelevant: survey

BINGE drinking by young Australians won't be fixed by pointing them to official alcohol consumption guidelines, new research shows. The National Health and Medical Research

Council (*NHMRC*) guidelines, which give recommendations on how many standard drinks should be consumed in a day, were viewed as "irrelevant", said Dr Lyn Harrison of Deakin University. "The rationale for these guidelines is that once people get the information, they will act on it and change their behaviour," she said. "Yet the data from the young people in our study, shows that this is not necessarily the case." Sixty young Victorian drinkers - 20 each from Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool – were quizzed for their views on their alcohol intake and included the relevancy of the NHMRC guidelines.

5AA (Adelaide), 07:30 News,   04/12/2008 07:32AM
Compere: Newsreader
Duration: 0 mins 26 secs   SummaryID: A00032985841

New research has revealed guidelines that show how much alcohol young people should drink are useless. The National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines recommend how many standard drinks should be consumed in a day but researchers from Deakin University say many people consider them irrelevant.

Demographics
ABs: 10000
GBs: 33000
Male 16+: 28000
Female 16+: 26000
All People 16+: 54000

NOVA 100.3 (Melbourne), 07:00 News,
**   04/12/2008 07:00AM**
Compere: Newsreader
Duration: 0 mins 16 secs   SummaryID: M00032984451

A Deakin University study has found the new guidelines about safe drinking do not really put teenagers off drinking, but instead has the opposite effect.

Demographics
ABs: 25000
GBs: 23000
Male 16+: 29000
Female 16+: 44000
All People 16+: 73000

Chris Hickey

Hickey, C. (2008): Dilemmas and tensions associated with the responsible, but illegal, serving of alcohol in Sporting Clubs. *Youth Sport and Health Research Network Forum*, University of Sydney, Nov 24/25.

Hickey, C. (2008): "I"m allowed to have two drinks": Dilemmas and tensions associated with the responsible, but illegal, serving of alcohol *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference* Presentation. University of Melbourne, 2-5 December.

Interview with Libby Price 774 ABC Melbourne. Underage, alcohol and sporting clubs. 5th Dec 2008.

Radio National (Canberra), Bush Telegraph,
**   27/01/2009 11:06AM**
Compere: Michael Mackenzie

Interview with Dr Chris Hickey from Deakin University about sports clubs and binge drinking. Hickey says that the issue is whether to condone alcohol as the social fabric of sports clubs, or to encourage moderation. Hickey conducted a study in which he spoke to members of fourteen sports clubs to find out their participation in the club and the place of alcohol within it. In rural and regional Australia, Hickey says that sporting clubs are central to the community, and are seen to be responsible. Paul Dunlop from Dayleston Football Club in Victoria has joined the Australian Drug Foundation's Good Sports Program, which promotes responsible drinking. Dunlop says that the club began to lose its reputation as a strong family club due to some issues with alcohol in 2004. Hickey says that Dunlop's experience is very similar to most of those covered in the study.

Interviewee: Dr Chris Hickey, Deakin University
Interviewee: Paul Dunlop, Dayleston Football Club.
Duration: 14 mins 30 secs   SummaryID: C00033493859

Peter Kelly

Kelly, Peter. (2008) "Charismatic Cops, Patriarchs and Good Women: Leadership, club culture and young peoples' drinking" *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference* Presentation. University of Melbourne, 2-5 December.

Jo Lindsay

Lindsay, Jo (2008) "It's my time to shine": Young Australians reflect on past, present and imagined future alcohol consumption *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference* Presentation. University of Melbourne, 2-5 December.

Lindsay, Jo (2008) Young people, the booze battlegrounds and self-control *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA)* Conference Presentation. University of Melbourne, 2-5 December.

Jenny Advocat

Advocat, J. (2008) "I knew that it was cooler if I did": Key drivers and deterrents for young people drinking alcohol *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference* Presentation. University of Melbourne, 2-5 December.