

Media Release

Violent assaults reducing in the Northern Territory thanks to minimum alcohol price

29 April 2020

Surgeons have welcomed an Independent Review of the Northern Territory's minimum unit price (MUP) on alcohol, which has highlighted a reduction in violent crimes and assaults since the policy was introduced.

Among the findings of the Independent Review are:

- alcohol-related assault offences (a 23% reduction in alcohol related assaults across the Territory in 2018/19 compared to the same period in 2017/18)
- alcohol-related emergency department (ED) presentations (17.3% reduction in ED presentations in the NT in 2018/19 compared to the same period in 2017/18).

The establishment of the MUP was part of a suite of policy measures that were implemented in response to the Riley Review in 2017, which highlighted the extent of the underlying alcohol problem within the NT, and the devastating consequences this has had on the community.

Dr John Crozier, Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) Trauma Committee, commended the NT Government for its commitment to the MUP, despite vocal and alarmist opposition from the alcohol industry.

“As surgeons we are very aware of the devastating effect of heavy alcohol consumption on the lives of Territorians. Misuse of alcohol is strongly implicated in our high rates of injury due to interpersonal violence, road traffic accidents and family violence.”

“I remember when the MUP was first introduced there was a clearly orchestrated campaign from certain sections within the alcohol industry, which was unchallenged by many in the media and relied upon on false assertions while ignoring the overwhelming evidence base.

“Today's report has highlighted beyond a shadow of a doubt that these reforms are working. They are reducing crime, they are reducing antisocial behaviour, and ultimately they are saving lives.

“The success of the MUP demonstrates how imperative it is that practical evidence-based measures are supported in the face of industry pressures. The Northern Territory Government's decision to stand by its policies, and to balance commercial interests with the overall wellbeing of Territorians is to be applauded.

“I hope that other Australian Governments are paying careful attention and are considering their own MUP.”

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About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery. www.surgeons.org