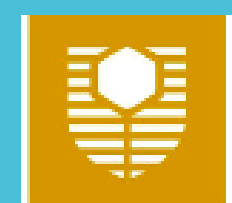


Research Summary:

Alcogenic environments and alcohol marketing



Curtin University



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The issue

In Australia, alcohol is widely consumed and a highly socialised practice, especially among young people. Statistics show that one in five Australians aged 18-24 drink more than four standard drinks in a single day every week, putting 42% of young adults at risk of alcohol-related injuries.



Public health experts are now looking more closely at the socio-cultural influences that shape drinking behaviours. One important area of focus is the development of alcogenic environments – places where alcohol is highly accessible and heavily marketed, contributing to increased consumption and harm. Alcogenic environments are shaped by factors such as the affordability of alcohol, aggressive marketing strategies, and the concentration of alcohol outlets in certain areas. The alcohol industry, like other commercial sectors, uses these environments to promote products that negatively impact health. Young people are especially targeted through marketing, which has been shown to significantly increase their alcohol consumption.



In Australia, a specific concern is alcohol consumption in aquatic environments, such as beaches, rivers, and pools, contributing to what has been termed an **aquatic alcogenic environment**. Drinking near water poses a risk of injury, including drowning. The aquatic alcogenic environment has been underexplored and more evidence is needed regarding the impact of alcohol advertising on alcohol-related risk practices in aquatic environments frequented by young people. This observational study investigated the geospatial characteristics of aquatic alcogenic environments in Western Australia.

The study: Exploring alcohol advertising in WA's aquatic areas

The research aimed to quantify the presence and content of alcohol advertising in and around coastal precincts in metropolitan Perth, Western Australia (WA) and map liquor outlet density and licensed venue proximity.

Precincts were identified as those where populations were considered 'at risk' of alcohol-related water injury. Precincts were adjacent to alcohol outlet(s) and/or function venues or eating/drinking establishments licensed to sell alcohol (such as cafes and/or restaurants), as well as being locations that host significant community events (e.g. surf carnivals, food festivals, markets and outdoor concerts) during the southern hemisphere summer.

Five aquatic precincts:

Mandurah

City Beach

Cottesloe

Hillarys Marina

Scarborough Beach

Via an environmental audit, the research team collected data on all advertisements within each precinct. A coding framework was then used to capture each advertisement's aquatic locations, activities and features. Data was used to create an interactive web map containing the alcohol advertising data from each precinct and other information including the locations of waterways and all currently licensed alcohol outlets.

Key findings

1. Prevalence of alcohol ads

Two-thirds of the 520 advertisements identified featured alcohol, with 13% of those showing aquatic locations, most commonly beaches.

2. Types of ads

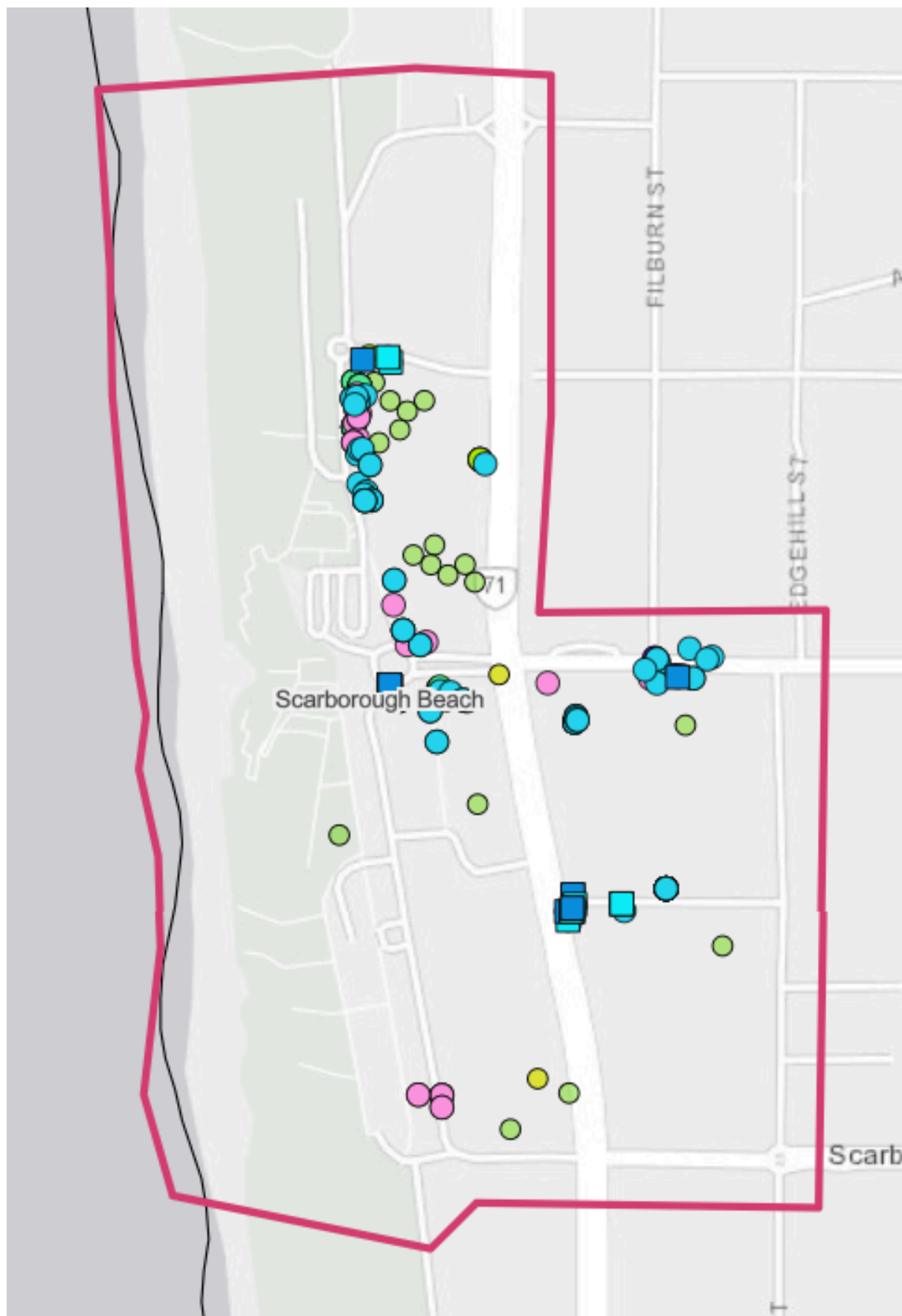
Alcohol advertisements were mostly medium-sized posters or banners, with free-standing signs and umbrellas also common. These ads were often found near cafes or restaurants.

3. Alcohol outlets

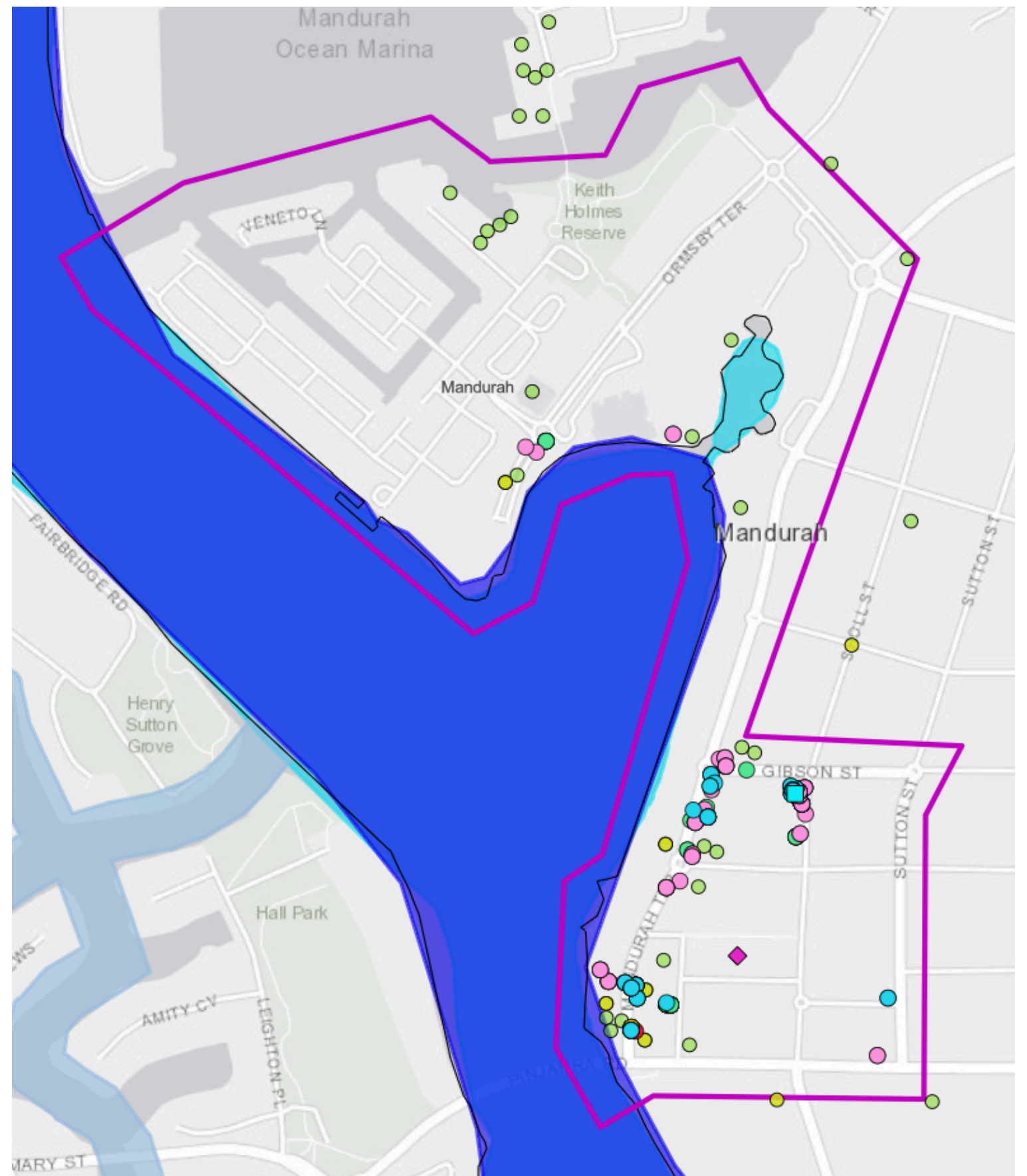
There was a notable concentration of alcohol outlets, particularly near beaches popular with young people, such as Cottesloe and Scarborough. This co-location of alcohol advertisements and outlets creates a stronger aquatic alcogenic environment, encouraging alcohol consumption in these social spaces.

This map provides a visual representation of the aquatic alcogenic environment. Shown below are images of precincts from the interactive map, which you can visit [here](#). Blue squares indicate alcohol advertising featuring an aquatic location and/or a water-based activity such as surfing.

Scarborough Beach

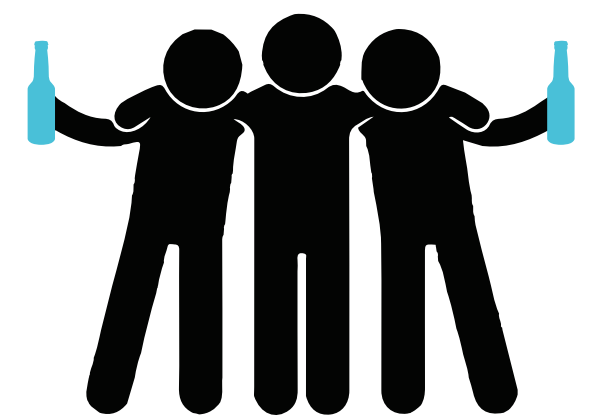


Mandurah



The problem with alcohol ads near water

The findings highlight the frequent pairing of alcohol advertisements with images of aquatic activities like surfing. These ads often portray alcohol as part of fun, social, and exciting experiences, appealing to young people and even international tourists. However, alcohol consumption in these settings increases the risk of drowning and other injuries.



To address these risks, there is a growing call for stronger regulation of alcohol advertising, particularly in aquatic environments. Like successful campaigns that reduced alcohol-impaired driving, there is potential to leverage greater public support for restricting alcohol promotion around water activities. The findings from this study provide insights for future policy advocacy aimed at reducing young people's exposure to alcohol in high-risk settings such as aquatic environments.

This study sheds light on how alcohol advertising in aquatic settings contributes to harmful drinking behaviours among young people. It highlights the need for stronger regulations and public health interventions to reduce alcohol exposure in these environments. By addressing the commercial and social factors that normalise alcohol use in and around waterways, public health efforts can play a crucial role in reducing alcohol-related harm.