



Impairment from Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy

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1. Purpose and Authority

The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) and Parliamentarians are committed to providing and supporting safe, respectful, and healthy working environments. Impairment from alcohol or other drugs is a risk to work health and safety and can have a negative impact on the effective and efficient operation of Parliament.

This policy applies to the following Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace (CPW) participants, collectively referred to throughout this policy as '**participants**':

- Parliamentarians
- *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (Cth) (MOP(S) Act) employees
- other persons who carry out work in any capacity for a business or undertaking of the Commonwealth constituted by the provision of support for the functioning of Parliament. This includes trainees, work experience students and volunteers.

This policy sets out the responsibilities of participants, and the standard of behaviour that is expected of them in relation to the use of alcohol and other drugs:

- in CPWs
- while participants are at work in the provision of support for the functioning of Parliament.

This policy has been drafted having regard to the *Alcohol Policy Principles* agreed by the [Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce](#).

2. Key principles

This policy is aimed at maintaining a safe work environment, supporting the elimination or minimisation of risks to the health and safety of participants and enabling the efficient and effective functioning of the Parliament through:

- a safety and harm minimisation approach to the use of alcohol or other drugs
- reducing the risks from alcohol or other drugs as a contributing factor to inappropriate workplace behaviour
- upholding a culture that is fully inclusive, welcoming and respectful to all regardless of an individual's choice to consume alcohol
- ensuring that WHS and other legislative obligations are met
- providing education and support options, including to those who may be impacted or impaired by the use of alcohol or other drugs.

3. Responsibilities

Participants

Participants should:

- ensure that they are fit for duty and not attend a CPW or undertake duties while impaired by alcohol or other drugs, recognising that the hangover effects of alcohol and other drugs could mean that they are still be impaired for driving and/or work the next day
- consume alcohol responsibly if it is served at a work-related event and respect the choice of other people to consume alcohol or not
- comply with their obligations under the WHS Act, including

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- taking reasonable care for the participant's own health and safety
- taking reasonable care that the participant's acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons
- comply with all applicable Australian laws
- comply with the CPW behaviour codes and standards including the Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians and Behaviour Code for staff employed under the MOP(S) Act
- inform their supervisor, Parliamentarian or the PWSS if they are not fit for duty, or if they are reasonably concerned that another participant is not fit for duty, as a result of them being affected by alcohol or other drugs.

Participants who are taking prescription medication and are in any doubt about their fitness to perform any or all of their normal duties, should consult their medical practitioner and discuss alternative work options with their supervisor or Parliamentarian. The PWSS can provide advice on options and assist with any discussions.

Parliamentarians and authorised persons

Strong leadership plays a crucial role in creating safe, respectful and healthy workplaces that minimise the potential harm associated with the use of alcohol or other drugs in the workplace. Parliamentarians and authorised persons should take a systematic approach to managing risks associated with impairment due to the consumption of alcohol or other drugs, with the primary aim of eliminating these risks, and if this is not reasonably practicable, minimising these risks as far as is reasonably practicable.

Parliamentarians and other authorised persons should:

- comply with their obligations under the WHS Act, including exercising due diligence to ensure that the Commonwealth complies with its duties and obligations under the WHS Act
- set clear expectations of appropriate workplace behaviour
- model appropriate standards of behaviour
- recognise and respect different cultural and individual views in relation to alcohol
- monitor participant's behaviour, health and safety at work
- report and respond to incidents.

In setting acceptable and appropriate standards of behaviour under this policy, Parliamentarians and authorised persons are expected to:

- promote awareness of this policy and available support as well as provide information, education, training, instruction and supervision necessary to support the elimination or minimisation of the risks associated with impairment at work due to the consumption of alcohol or other drugs.
- ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of participants while the participants are at work (including at functions in connection with their work). This includes taking all reasonable steps to ensure participants are in a fit state to perform their duties safely and appropriately and that they are not impaired by alcohol or other drugs
- take appropriate action where impairment is identified (see Section 6: Managing participants who are impaired).
- maintain safe work environments where risks to health and safety associated with impairment due to the consumption of alcohol or other drugs are eliminated or minimised as far as reasonably practicable
- develop and implement systems at work that promote safety and harm minimisation.

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The PWSS will provide support to any participant who may become aware of an impairment issue in the workplace and may be seeking guidance on how to respond to the situation.

4. Work-related events

Alcohol may be consumed at approved work-related events and functions that have been supported by a Parliamentarian.

If alcohol is available, it must be served and consumed responsibly irrespective of whether the event is at a CPW or off-site.

Event organisers must take reasonably practicable measures to minimise the risks associated with impairment if alcohol is served (see Attachment A – Simple Event Checklist). These measures may include, but are not limited to:

- having start and finish times for the event
- engaging hospitality staff with relevant skills and qualifications, including the responsible service of alcohol certification
- ensuring that caterers are aware of the requirement to:
 - provide a variety of zero alcohol¹ and low-alcohol beverage options, as well as soft options such as juice, soft drink and water, that are displayed as prominently as alcoholic drinks
 - cater for the dietary needs of all those attending the function e.g. vegetarian, halal, gluten-free
 - not serve alcohol prior to the advertised event start time and to conclude service of alcohol at least 15 minutes prior to the advertised event end time
 - use staff with relevant skills and qualifications including the responsible service of alcohol certification.
- appointing an authorised person to monitor the event and take necessary actions to ensure that risks are managed
- ensuring that alternative transport options are accessible for people who have consumed alcohol
- clarification and communication to relevant stakeholders of protocols for dealing with impaired persons (event organisers should contact the Parliamentary Security Service for events held at Parliament House).

5. Travel

This policy also applies when undertaking domestic or overseas travel for work purposes.

6. Managing participants who are impaired

Encourage support

Participants who are experiencing drug or alcohol dependency should, in the first instance, seek advice from their medical practitioner regarding the most appropriate treatment for them.

¹ Products can be sold as zero-alcohol drinks (non-alcoholic drinks) when they contain less than 0.5% alcohol by volume (ABV) and as such, can contain small amounts of alcohol. Source: [Alcohol and Drug Foundation](#).

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Participants may access confidential counselling and support 24/7 through the PWSS Counselling and Support team. The team may connect an employee with specialised support or professional assistance as appropriate for their individual circumstances.

The PWSS takes a safety and harm minimisation approach to the use of alcohol or other drugs in the workplace, with the priority of ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all participants.

Cease work and safe transport

A Parliamentarian or authorised person should direct a participant to leave a CPW and/or cease performing work, and if appropriate, arrange safe transportation for the participant from the workplace, if the participant is affected by alcohol or drugs and:

- they are not fit to perform their duties and responsibilities effectively
- their condition presents a work health and safety risk to the participant and/or others
- their condition presents a security risk
- they engage in behaviour that is inappropriate towards others or which could negatively impact the functioning of Parliament.

Disciplinary action

A participant who fails to comply with their responsibilities under this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including sanctions, in conjunction with being provided with appropriate support. The Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (IPSC) may investigate complaints about the behaviour codes and standards.

The PWSS can provide further guidance on managing participants who are impaired, including how to address the matter as a safety, conduct or performance issue.

7. Contacts and Resources

In an emergency

If you or anyone in your workplace is in immediate danger, please [call 000](#) for police or ambulance assistance.

To arrange emergency services in Australian Parliament House (APH), call APH Security on 02 6277 7117. Security will ring 000 and meet the first responders on arrival.

For immediate support, call the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015. You will be automatically directed to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service in your state or territory.

Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS)

The PWSS is available to provide a range of human resource and work health and safety support and guidance to Parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees. We also provide wellbeing support, conflict resolution and early intervention to all participants.

The PWSS can also be contacted via phone 24/7 on **1800 747 977**, by SMS on 0487 112 755, email at support@PWSS.gov.au, or in person at M2.105 in APH from 8.30am-7pm sitting days or 9.00am-5pm all other business days. Visit <https://pwss.gov.au> for more information.

Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (IPSC)

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The [Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission](#) (IPSC) is an independent workplace investigation framework for Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace participants. The IPSC supports safe and respectful workplaces for parliamentarians, their staff and other people who work in a Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace.

The IPSC can be contacted via phone via phone at 1800 01 4772 (1800 01 IPSC) or complete the submission form [here](#).

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Current MOP(S) Act employees and parliamentarians, as well as their immediate family and household members, have access to free, professional and confidential counselling through our EAP provider, TELUS Health. Former MOP(S) Act employees and parliamentarians can continue to have access until 3 months after their employment ends. TELUS Health services are available virtually or in-person.

You can [contact TELUS Health](#) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to schedule an appointment. Alternatively, you can book an appointment through the [TELUS Health One app](#) (**Username:** pwss **Password:** Wellbeing). Through the app, you can view session availability as well as read clinician bios to identify the consultant best suited to your needs.

Before Blue workplaces Program

Parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees have access to Before Blue, an early intervention mental health program which provides tools and support to manage stress, build resilience, and enhance overall mental wellbeing. This service was developed by Beyond Blue in partnership with Comcare.

The service can be accessed without a GP referral or mental health treatment plan. Neither the PWSS nor your employing parliamentarian receive any identifying information about employees who access the service.

You can access the service either through the [website](#) or [app](#). Select 'Sign up now' and use the registration code: **PWSS-B4B**.

National resources

- [Lifeline Australia: Substance abuse, misuse and addiction | 13 11 14](#)
- [Family Drug Support Australia](#)
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- [Narcotics Anonymous Australia](#)
- [The Alcohol and Drug Foundation](#)
- Hello Sunday Morning: [Daybreak App](#)

Canberra-based community resources

- Canberra Health Services: [Alcohol and drug services](#)
- CAHMA: [Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy](#)
- Directions: [Pathways to Recovery](#)
- Karalika Programs Inc: [Alcohol and Drug Services in Canberra](#)

8. Definitions

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Term	Definition
Alcohol	The alcohol in drinks such as beer, wine or spirits, is called ethanol (ethyl alcohol). It is made when yeast ferments the sugars in grains, fruits and vegetables.
Source: Commonwealth Department of Health	Alcohol is a drug that can be toxic and addictive and can lead to harmful short- and long-term <u>effects</u> . Alcohol is a <u>depressant</u> that slows down the messages that travel between your brain and your body and affects the way you think, feel and behave.
Authorised persons	A person who has been authorised by a parliamentarian to exercise duties on their behalf.
Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace (CPW)	A CPW includes any workplace where parliamentary work occurs, such as Australian Parliament House and parliamentary precincts, ministerial, parliamentary and electorate offices, Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices, home offices. This includes when that work may be remote from a CPW (for example, at external meetings/events or whilst travelling for work purposes).
Impairment	A participant is considered to be impaired if they are unfit to perform their duties and responsibilities safely, effectively and/or productively.
Low alcohol drinks	Only beverages containing less than 1.15% alcohol by volume can be represented using the term 'low alcohol'. Source: Wine Australia, September 2021
MOP(S) Act employee	MOP(S) Act employees are staff employed under the <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (Cth)</i> . MOP(S) Act employees are employed by Parliamentarians on behalf of the Commonwealth.
Participant	For this policy, a participant includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliamentarians • MOP(S) Act employees • other persons who carry out work in any capacity for a business or undertaking of the Commonwealth constituted by the provision of support for the functioning of Parliament. This includes trainees, work experience students and volunteers.
Parliamentarian	This term refers collectively to Members of the House of Representatives and Senators.
PWSS	Parliamentary Workplace Support Service
WHS Act	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)</i>
Zero-alcohol/non-alcoholic drinks	Marketing terminology for 'products mimicking alcohol', which can be defined as: A beverage containing less than 0.5% alcohol by volume (ABV) that features the branding of established alcohol companies, and/or is designed to imitate the flavour, packaging, or overall appearance of alcohol products. Source: Alcohol and Drug Foundation

9. Document Control

This document will be reviewed every two years or earlier when a business requirement is identified.

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Version Control	
Approving authority	Chief Executive Officer of the PWSS
Date approved	
Current version	v0.1
Internal stakeholder/s	
Record ID	
Notes	

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10. Attachment A – Simple Event Checklist

	Yes	No
Pre-event		
Has the catering provider been asked to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide and display zero-alcohol and low-alcohol beverage options e.g. beer, wine, cider, spirits, juice, mocktails etc as well as juices, soft drinks and water 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cater for the dietary needs of all those attending the function e.g. vegetarian, halal, gluten-free 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not serve alcohol prior to the advertised event start time and to conclude service of alcohol at least 15 minutes prior to the advertised event end time 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use staff with relevant skills and qualifications including the responsible service of alcohol certification. 		
Have invitees been asked to provide information on their dietary requirements?		
Have staff been identified who may be vulnerable at work events and strategies developed help them remain safe at the event e.g.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stay connected - remain in the main function area so that you are not isolated from colleagues 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> look out for each other - check in with team members particularly if they have been talking with the same person for some time – agree on a signal or code word to indicate if everything is alright or if they need assistance to leave the conversation 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have an exit strategy - if someone makes you feel uncomfortable or scared, excuse yourself to get a drink, speak to a colleague or go to the bathroom. If this doesn't work, use agreed signals to alert colleagues and let them know that you need assistance 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> don't feel pressured to drink alcohol. Enjoy the zero-alcohol or low-alcohol alternatives available as well as juices, soft drinks and water 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drink slowly and stay hydrated - alternate alcoholic drinks with alternatives such as juices, soft drinks or water 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep track of how many drinks you've had so that you can remain in control 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> always watch your drink – this minimises the risk of someone filling up your glass without your agreement. 		
Have clear expectations been set regarding responsible consumption of alcohol and acceptable behaviour in relation to alcohol at work events?		
Has a plan been established with event staff/Parliamentary Security Service to safely and appropriately manage inappropriate behaviour?		
Have participants been reminded of:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> their health and safety responsibilities 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appropriate workplace behaviour expectations 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling comfortable to opt out of alcohol consumption? 		
During event		

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Yes No

Has someone been appointed to look out for signs of impairment and address any concerns discreetly and sensitively?

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