

'What's your poison?' campaign

Community Toolkit

alcohol**think**again



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'What's your poison?' campaign

About the Toolkit

This Toolkit provides information and resources for the **'What's your poison?' campaign**. We encourage community organisations and groups to share these resources with your networks and communities.

If you would like support to implement the campaign resources, please contact the Community Support and Development Programs Team at the Mental Health Commission.

Email: communityprograms@mhc.wa.gov.au

About the campaign

The **'What's your poison?' campaign** is a joint initiative by the Mental Health Commission and Cancer Council WA, supported by Healthway.

The campaign prompts people to reconsider the common phrase, 'what's your poison?', by showing that when a person drinks alcohol, the body converts it to acetaldehyde, a poison.

It explains that every drink converts to more poison, increasing the damage, and increasing the risk of cancer. The campaign calls for Western Australian adults to reduce their drinking to reduce the damage.

The campaign was developed in consultation with over 130 Western Australian adults, and guided by experts in public health, research and social marketing.

It is part of the WA Government's state-wide strategy to prevent harm caused by alcohol, and the fifth instalment of the Alcohol and Health campaign stream since the Alcohol. Think Again program commenced in 2010.

Key messages

- Your body converts alcohol to poison.
- Reduce your drinking to reduce the damage.

Target audience

- Primary target audience: All adults in Western Australia.
- Secondary target audience: Adults who exceed the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) Australian Alcohol Guideline.¹

Campaign objectives

- Increase awareness about *how* alcohol causes harm to health.
- Increase awareness among adults that their current drinking can impact their health.
- Increase intention, confidence and self-reported action to reduce alcohol use.

¹ "To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day".

Evidence to support the campaign

The need

- Around one in three adults (33%) who drink alcohol exceed the NHMRC's Australian Alcohol Guideline.²
- Nearly two out of three WA adults (63%) who drink above the Guideline consider the amount they drink to be 'OK'.³
- Only just over half of WA adults (57%) are confident that alcohol is a poison.³
- On average, 3 West Australians die from cancer caused by alcohol each week in WA.⁴

Your body converts alcohol to poison

Alcohol has toxic effects on cells, tissues and organs in the body. This is caused by:

1. Ethanol

Ethanol is the main component of alcohol. Ethanol is a Group 1 carcinogen, meaning it is a known cause of cancer, in the same category as tobacco and asbestos.⁵

2. Acetaldehyde (pronounced *a-suh-tal-duh-hide*)

When your body breaks down alcohol, it is converted to acetaldehyde, a highly toxic chemical and Group 1 carcinogen.³ Acetaldehyde damages DNA in cells and stops them from repairing the damage. This can build up and cause irreversible damage which can lead to cancer.^{6,7}

- Acetaldehyde is around 10 times more toxic than ethanol.⁸ High levels of acetaldehyde in the body can cause headaches, nausea, increased heart rate, and facial flushing; symptoms commonly associated with a hangover.⁹
- Over 90% of alcohol is broken down and converted to acetaldehyde by enzymes in the liver. A small amount of alcohol is broken down in the mouth, stomach, and intestines.
- Your body can only metabolise around one standard drink of alcohol per hour. The more you drink, the more your body is exposed to the damaging effects of acetaldehyde.

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Measuring risky drinking according to the Australian alcohol guidelines. 2021. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/measuring-risky-drinking-aus-alcohol-guidelines/contents/measuring-risky-drinking>

3 Mental Health Commission. 2023. Alcohol Attitudinal Research 2022. [Unpublished].

4 Epidemiology Branch, WA Department of Health. Alcohol-attributable hospitalisation and death data [Unpublished]. 2019.

5 International Agency for Research on Cancer. Personal habits and indoor combustions. Lyon, France: IARC, 2012. <https://publications.iarc.fr/Book-And-Report-Series/Iarc-Monographs-On-The-Identification-Of-Carcinogenic-Hazards-To-Humans/Personal-Habits-And-Indoor-Combustions-2012>

6 Connor J. Alcohol consumption as a cause of cancer. *Addiction*. 2017 Feb;112(2):222-228. doi: 10.1111/add.13477. Epub 2016 Jul 21. PMID: 27442501.

7 Cancer Council Victoria. How alcohol causes cancer. Available from: <https://www.cancervic.org.au/preventing-cancer/limit-alcohol/how-alcohol-causes-cancer>

8 Zhang Y, Ren J. ALDH2 in alcoholic heart diseases: molecular mechanism and clinical implications. *Pharmacol Ther*. 2011 Oct;132(1):86-95. doi: 10.1016/j.pharmthera.2011.05.008.

9 Penning R, van Nuland M, Fliervoet LA, Olivier B, Verster JC. The pathology of alcohol hangover. *Curr Drug Abuse Rev*. 2010 Jun;3(2):68-75. doi: 10.2174/1874473711003020068. PMID: 20712596.

Evidence to support the campaign

There is no safe level of alcohol

- Alcohol causes cancer in at least seven sites of the body:¹⁰
 - breast
 - bowel
 - mouth
 - larynx (voice box)
 - oesophagus (food pipe)
 - pharynx (upper throat)
 - liver
- Even drinking small amounts of alcohol increases your risk of developing cancer. The more you drink and the more often you drink, the greater your risk.¹¹
- Alcohol is directly linked to over 40 medical conditions, including heart disease, stroke, liver disease, mental health conditions, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.¹²

Australian Alcohol Guidelines

- The NHMRC's Australian Alcohol Guidelines⁸ recommend no more than 10 standard drinks a week **and** no more than 4 standard drinks on any day to reduce the risk of alcohol-related disease and injury. The less you drink, the lower your risk of harm.
- Healthy adults who stick to the Australian Alcohol Guideline have less than a 1 in 100 chance of dying from an alcohol-related condition.
- The Guideline can help Australians to make informed decisions about how much alcohol they drink, if any.

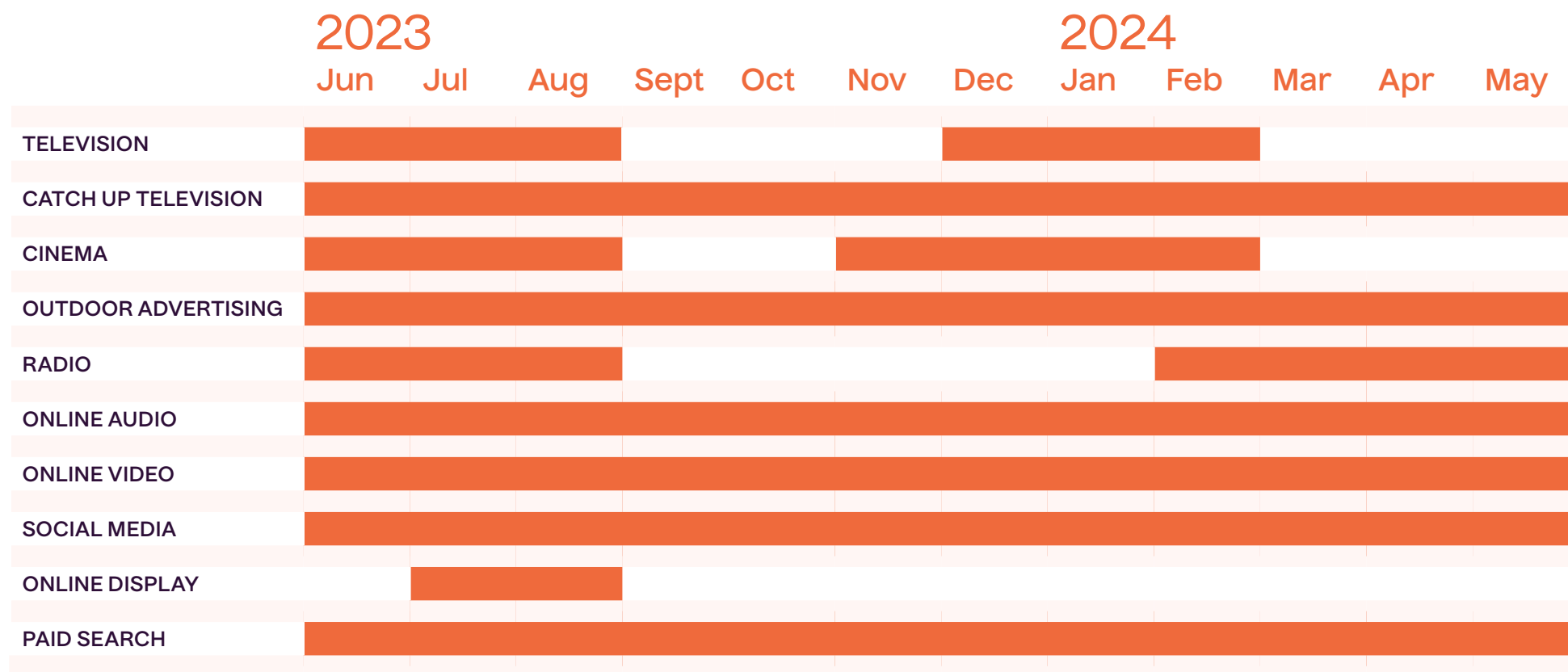
8 Zhang Y, Ren J. ALDH2 in alcoholic heart diseases: molecular mechanism and clinical implications. *Pharmacol Ther.* 2011 Oct;132(1):86-95. doi: 10.1016/j.pharmthera.2011.05.008.

10 World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research. Continuous Update Project Expert Report 2018. Alcoholic drinks and the risk of cancer. Available at <https://www.wcrf.org/diet-and-cancer>

11 University of Sydney. Evidence evaluation report: evaluating the evidence on the health effects of alcohol consumption. Sydney: NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre; 2018. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/Alcohol/9-evaluation-submitted-health-effects.pdf>

12 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol. National Health and Medical Research Council. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-reduce-health-risks-drinking-alcohol>

State-wide campaign schedule



For specific information about the campaign schedule in your local area, contact campaigns@mhc.wa.gov.au

Campaign resources

Television commercial | 30, 15 and 6 seconds



CLICK TO WATCH THE
30 SECOND COMMERCIAL



CLICK TO WATCH THE
15 SECOND COMMERCIAL



CLICK TO WATCH THE
6 SECOND COMMERCIAL

Campaign resources

Radio commercials | 30 seconds



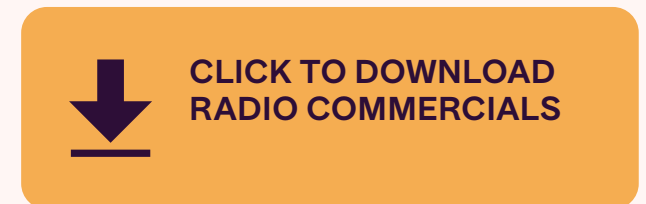
30 second radio - AFL



30 second radio - Home



30 second radio - BBQ

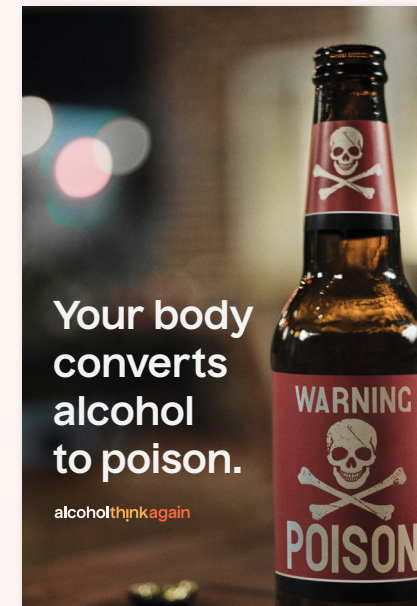


Campaign resources

Outdoor advertising



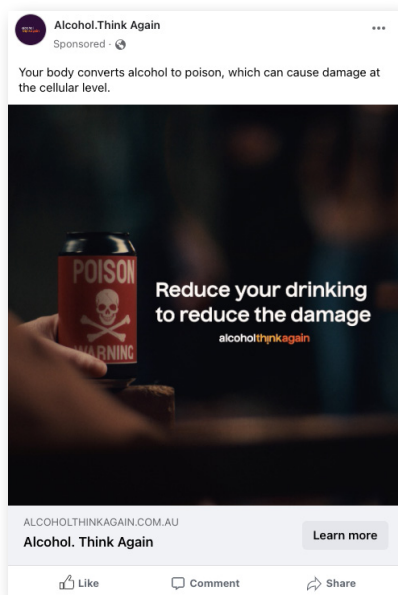
Large format



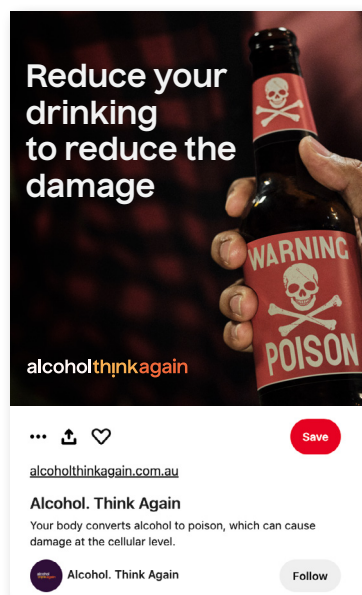
Small format

Campaign resources

Social media assets



Social
6 second video



Social
Static

We encourage you to share these social media assets through your organisation's social media, website, or newsletters.

Text option:

"Your body converts alcohol to poison, which can cause damage at the cellular level. Reduce your drinking, to reduce the damage."

Hash tags:

#AlcoholThinkAgain
#WhatsYourPoison
#ReduceYourDrinking
#AlcoholConvertsToPoison

Tag us and share our social media content at:

Facebook: [Alcohol.Think Again](#)

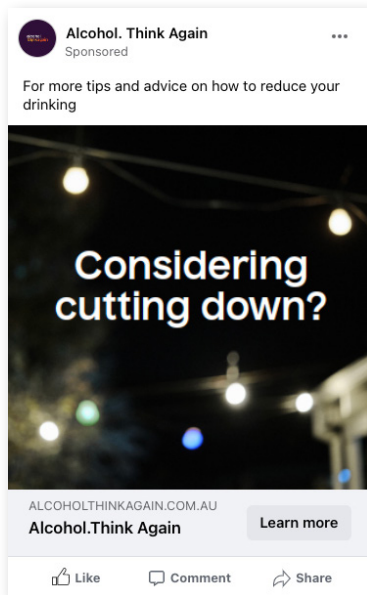
Instagram: [@alcohol.thinkagain_wa](#)



**CLICK TO DOWNLOAD
VIDEO AND STATIC
SOCIAL MEDIA ASSETS**

Campaign resources

Social media assets – Targeted messaging



Social
10 second in-feed video



Social
10 second story video

Targeted messages include:

- Considering cutting down? It doesn't have to mean giving up.
- When you drink less you can save some money, boost your mood & sleep better.
- Even small reductions in your drinking can make a big difference.
- Thinking about reducing your drinking? Why not plan a few alcohol-free days a week?
- It's easier than you think to reduce how much you drink.
- If you're asking yourself 'do I really need this drink?' Chances are you don't.
- Challenge yourself to reduce your drinking.

Alongside the primary campaign resources, these social resources have been developed to encourage and support adults to reduce their drinking.

We encourage you to share these social media assets through your organisation's social accounts, website, or newsletters.

#AlcoholThinkAgain
#ReduceYourDrinking
#AlcoholFree

You can share and like our social media content at:

Facebook: [Alcohol.Think.Again](https://www.facebook.com/Alcohol.Think.Again)

Instagram: [@alcohol.thinkagain_wa](https://www.instagram.com/alcohol.thinkagain_wa)

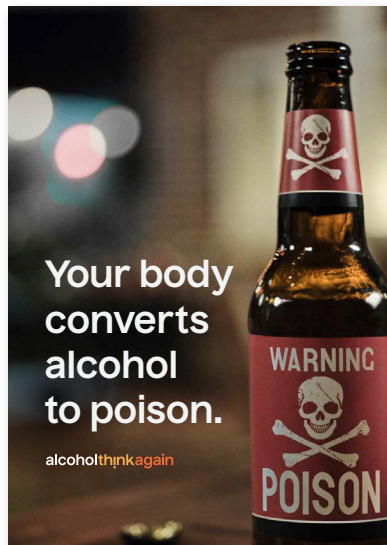


**CLICK TO DOWNLOAD
VIDEO SOCIAL MEDIA
ASSETS**

Campaign resources

Publications

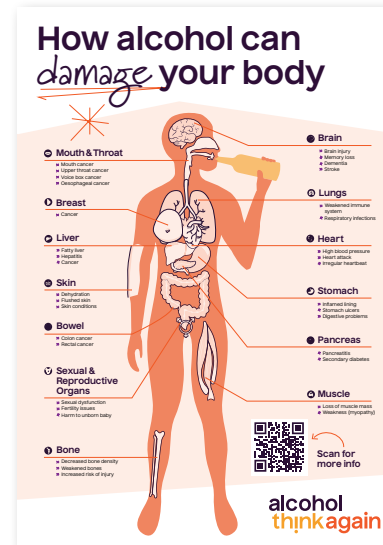
These resources are available to download or can be ordered as hard copies free for use in Western Australia from the [Alcohol. Think Again website](http://Alcohol.ThinkAgain.website).



Campaign poster



Campaign poster



How alcohol can damage your body poster



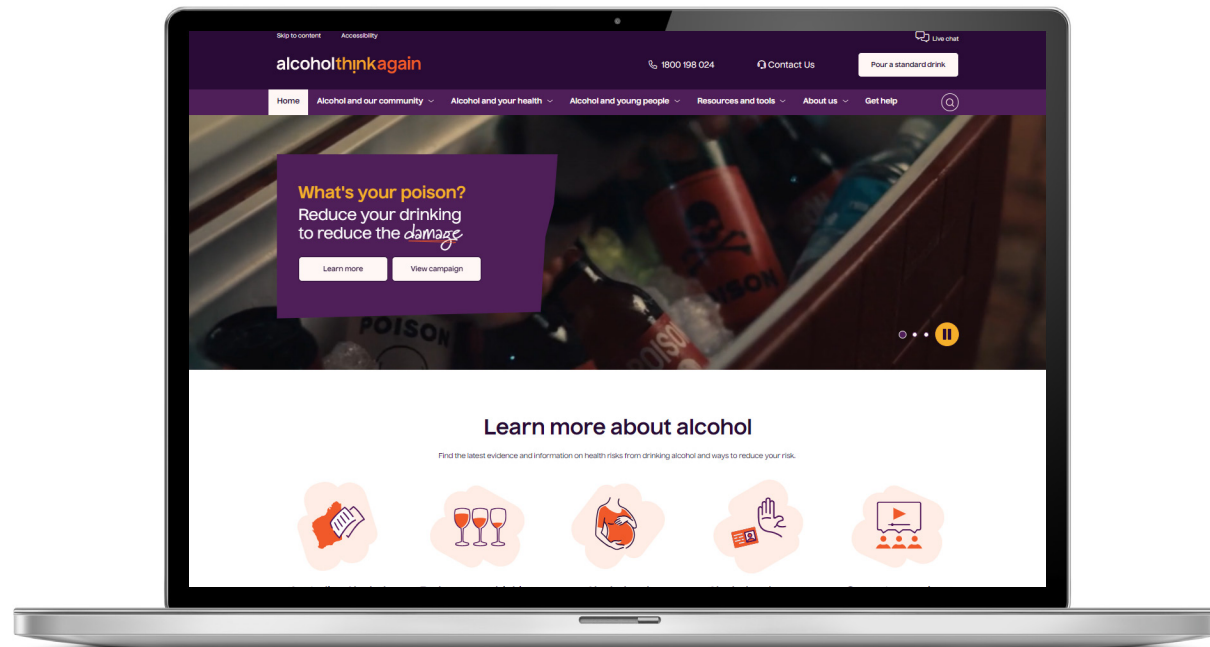
Standard drinks fact sheet



Tips to reduce drinking brochure

Campaign resources

New Alcohol. Think Again website



Website

The Alcohol. Think Again website has a brand-new look and feel. Visit alcoholthinkagain.com.au to find the latest evidence, resources and information on alcohol and health.

Check out our online tools:

- **Interactive body (new)**

Use our interactive body tool to explore the health risks from drinking alcohol and the short and long-term effects on the body.

- **Standard Drink Tool**

A standard drink is likely to be less than you think. Use the Standard Drink Tool to check how many drinks are in your typical pour.

Adapting the materials and branding

If your organisation would like to partner with Alcohol. Think Again to develop additional resources to support local activities, please get in touch with us at: campaigns@mhc.wa.gov.au

Co-branding

The Alcohol. Think Again logo is a registered trademark and must not be used without prior permission from the Mental Health Commission. Any use of the Alcohol. Think Again logo or branding outside these campaign materials requires approval.

Please provide the following information to campaigns@mhc.wa.gov.au

- Purpose of the publication/materials
- Target audience
- Key messages you are intending to communicate
- Where/how the resource will be used
- How long it will be used for
- When you need approval by

Disclaimer

The resources and materials within this toolkit are designed for the purpose of supporting local alcohol and other drug prevention and health promotion activities in Western Australia.

These materials should not be used in such a way or associated with a brand, service or organisation that may reduce the effectiveness and/or integrity of the materials; may damage the reputation of the Alcohol. Think Again brand, or supports, promotes or utilises sponsorship by companies that produce or promote alcohol beverage products or brands.

Contact the Community Support and Development Program Team for assistance in interpreting the appropriate use of these materials.

Email: communityprograms@mhc.wa.gov.au

Useful contacts

Alcohol. Think Again

Visit the Alcohol.Think Again website for more information and resources about alcohol and how to reduce harm in WA.

alcoholthinkagain.com.au

Alcohol and Drug Support Line

The Alcohol and Drug Support Line is a confidential, non-judgmental telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone seeking help for their own or another person's alcohol or drug use.

Metro callers: (08) 9442 5000

Country callers only: 1800 198 024

Alcohol Programs Team, Cancer Council WA

The Cancer Council WA Alcohol Programs Team works to inform community discussion about alcohol issues with the aim of reducing the impact of alcohol on the WA community, including as a cause of cancer. Contact the team if you would like to discuss action on alcohol in WA.

Email: alcoholprograms@cancerwa.asn.au

Community Support and Development Programs, Mental Health Commission

Contact the Community Support and Development Programs Team at the Mental Health Commission if you need further support to implement any of the campaign materials or to identify what other strategies can be implemented locally to address alcohol issues.

Email: communityprograms@mhc.wa.gov.au

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alcoholthinkagain.com.au

LAST UPDATED JUNE 2023