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Title: Using emergency department data to reduce late-night alcohol-related presentations in an Australian Central Business District.

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#### **Injury Prevention**

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#### Abstract

#### Introduction

The Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention is a data sharing approach aiming to reduce violence-related presentations to Emergency Departments (EDs). This model has not previously been tested with patients attending EDs in a major Australian urban setting, nor has the use of media reporting of results and letters to venues without a local violence prevention board been tested.

#### Objective

To determine this approach's effect on alcohol-associated presentation rates during highalcohol hours (HAH) in a major ED servicing the nightlife district in central Melbourne.

#### Design

Between July 2017 and June 2020, this prospective study asked people aged  $\geq 18$  years attending ED about their alcohol consumption and last drink location. From December 2018, quarterly letters were sent to the top five venues identified as the last drink location, and press releases were sent to all media outlets.

#### Findings

A significant gradual decrease in monthly injury attendance rates during HAH was observed (Coefficient = -0.001, p = 0.017), however no step change was found. Venue-level data highlighted a short-term drop in attributed events.

#### Discussion

Sharing Last Drinks ED data via stand-alone media reporting and letters to venues was associated with a small, but significant reduction in alcohol-related injury presentation rates. However, impact waned as media stopped reporting findings. This study highlights the importance of including a violence prevention board.

#### Conclusion

The model continues to have promise for reducing alcohol-related harm, however engagement from government agencies free from alcohol industry funding is important for long-term success.

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#### What is already known on this topic

There is a growing trend in using ED data of alcohol-related assault and injury attendances to inform community safety interventions, frequently referred to as the 'Cardiff Model'. The majority of studies evaluating the effectiveness of interventions based on the Cardiff Model have shown substantial reductions in ED attendances post-intervention.

#### What this study adds

This study has demonstrated a small, but significant reduction in alcohol-related injury presentation rates to ED following the implementation of the Cardiff Model. The data from

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an Australian capital city central business district adds to the existing data from a regional Australian town. Further, this research identifies that a violence prevention board and police intervention are critical components of the Cardiff Model for long-term impact, whereas relying on stand-alone media reporting and letters to venues appears to only have short-term effects.

#### How this study might affect research, practice, or policy

Sharing establishment data holds venues accountable for alcohol-related injuries, encouraging responsible practices among venue operators and promoting a safer nightlife environment. Collaborative involvement between healthcare institutions, local law enforcement and licensing authorities allow for informed policy actions such as adjusting operating hours and imposing alcohol-related restrictions to proactively mitigate injuries related to alcohol consumption. Further trials could involve media as a community partner as well.

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#### Introduction

Alcohol-related harm represents a substantial burden on Emergency Departments in Australia (1-3) and globally (4, 5). A 2am snapshot of 106 EDs across Australia and New Zealand found that one in seven presentations were alcohol-related, with some EDs seeing alcohol-presentations as high as one in three (6). Alcohol-related ED presentations are most likely to present between midnight and 5am on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night (7). A 2002 survey of Australian and New Zealand ED clinicians found that over 90 percent of staff had experienced alcohol-related physical aggression from an intoxicated patient, negatively affecting their own wellbeing and their capacity to treat other patients (2). This paper reports on a single site finding which was part of the larger Driving Change study conducted in 11 hospitals across Australia (8).

Nightlife entertainment precincts (NEPs) are geographically dense clusters of on-premises alcohol-serving outlets, that serve as important social and economic hubs in large towns and cities (9, 10). Heavy acute alcohol intoxication is common in these areas (10, 11) and has been associated with increased incidence of violence and injury among nightlife attendees (10, 12, 13). The concentrated level of crime, violence, and injury experienced in these areas puts a substantial burden on frontline workers that are required to respond to these incidents, such as emergency department staff.

Australian governments have introduced many policies measures aimed at reducing violence in NEPs, that consequently reduce the impact burden of alcohol-related violence and injuries on emergency department staff. These restrictions regulate how alcohol outlets operate, such as restricting trading hours, or limiting the type of alcohol that can be consumed in nightlife venues (14). Other methods include funding street service care providers to prevent

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individuals with minor problems from presenting to the ED (e.g. minor wounds, intoxication)(15). While both types of intervention seek to reduce the outflow of individuals from NEPs to EDs they fail to exploit that the majority of alcohol-related harm is attributable to a few problematic venues within a NEP (16). An intervention that could easily identify the specific venues contributing the majority of the harm, and hold the specific venues accountable, could potentially reduce alcohol-related harm without needing to change how compliant venues operate, or into funding additional services to act as a safety net against nightlife patrons attending an ED. Using ED data of alcohol-related assault and injury attendances to inform interventions aimed at reducing street level crime is a growing trend, frequently referred to as the 'Cardiff Model'(8). The Cardiff Model is a community-based multi-disciplinary data sharing intervention that includes health, justice, government, and researchers in data collection and analysis, and the development of consensus-based outcomes to improve community safety related to alcohol harm (17). These are often called a Violence Prevention Alliances (VPA) The majority of studies aimed at measuring the effectiveness of interventions based on the Cardiff Model showed substantial reductions in ED attendances post-intervention (1). Sharing ED data to prevent injuries is a public health approach recommended by the World Health Organisation (18, 19). In particular, Warburton and Sheppard (20) reported the use of media in conjunction with the VPA, which we believed warranted further testing. Our paper discussing a regionally-located Cardiff Model intervention determined a small, but significant reduction in injury presentation rate (3). This paper focusses on the implementation of the Cardiff Model in an Australian capital city central business district as part of the larger 5-year National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Driving Change project (8).

#### Aims and Hypotheses

Aligning with the broader project (8),this study aimed to determine the impact of a Cardiff Model of data-sharing on alcohol-related injuries in central Melbourne, during High Alcohol Hours (HAH): 20:00 hours Friday to 06:00 hours Saturday and 20:00 hours Saturday to 06:00 hours Sunday, recorded at time of triage. Based on the primary outcomes from the study protocol (8), it was hypothesised that:

- (i) the proportion of presentations in which the patients report alcohol use in the prior
  12 hours during HAH would significantly decrease after each intervention; and
- (ii) the proportion of presentations assigned an ICD-10 injury diagnosis (S&T code) occurring during HAH would significantly decrease after each intervention.

# Methods

#### Setting

Melbourne is the capital city of the state of Victoria, in south-eastern Australia. It has an Estimated Residential Population (ERP) of over 5 million people. Eight of the entertainment precincts in central Melbourne are a part of Victoria's 18 Designated Areas: an area experiencing alcohol-related violence within which police have extra powers in an attempt to reduce further violence and anti-social behaviour (https://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/community-services/government-initiatives/designated-areas).

Unpublished street intercept survey data indicates that only 11% of nightlife patrons in Melbourne reported their postcode of residence as the same one as they were interviewed in (21). Foot-traffic data from these areas also shows that the population in these spaces is transient, and not well represented by ERP. As the interventions targeted nightlife spaces, population data was not deemed a representative denominator for any of the analyses.

Data

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Originally a multi-state multi-site study set to end in late 2020, due to different and unique challenges faced by each hospital including prolonged bushfires in Canberra followed by the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the intervention was cut short, and each site was individually examined.

#### **Presentation data**

Between January 2015 to June 2020, ICD-10-AM (International Classification of Diseases 10th Revision, Australian Modification) primary diagnosis codes from all presentations of people 18 years and over to the St Vincent's Melbourne ED were obtained. St Vincent's hospital covers the main CBD of Melbourne (<u>https://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/hc\_250521.pdf</u>). The time of presentation to triage was also included. Based on previous research, only cases that occurred during high-alcohol hours (HAH, 8pm-6am Friday and Saturday nights; (7)) were extracted. ICD-10-AM injury codes (designated S and T) were used as per the original outcome measure set in the study protocol (8).

As St Vincent's Melbourne ED was shut down during February and March 2018, monthly presentations from January and April were averaged and used to replace data for those time points. Data from March 2020 and beyond were excluded from all analyses due to the unique impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on emergency department presentations.

#### Last Drinks questions

From July 2017 all people aged 18 years and older presenting to the ED were asked:

1) whether they had consumed alcohol in the past 12 hours,

2) their typical alcohol consumption during a drinking session,

3) the location where most of the alcohol was purchased, and

4) the location of their last alcoholic drink.

Questions were mandatory within the ED electronic medical record systems, with triage staff trained on the reasons behind each question. People aged younger than of 18 years were excluded. Clinicians used their clinical judgement to identify when asking the questions was inappropriate, including patients who were too unwell or non-responsive, or when questions were not asked for ethical reasons, such as a cultural or interpersonal issue (8).

#### Analysis

As per the previously-published paper (3), Interrupted time series (ITS) analysis (itsa command) in Stata 15 (22, 23) was used to estimate the influence of the intervention on monthly alcohol-related ED presentations. ITS allows simultaneous tests of step (immediate) and slope (gradual) changes in trends (24), this allowed us to evaluate the impact of the initial media release (step), and the gradual impact from the series of media releases (slope). A monthly seasonal variable was included in each model to account for periodic trends. Crosscorrelograms were examined to identify the best-fitting transfer function for the intervention N.C variable (specified as lag; (25)).

#### Intervention

The current study utilised concurrent interventions as per the larger Driving Change project (8) based on previously trialled interventions using the Cardiff model (1, 26-28). Each quarter, letters were sent to the top five venues reported within the ED as associated with alcohol-related injuries. These letters outlined the number of attendances and anonymised details of the cases. Letters were sent via the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) to the registered licensees. The de-identified, aggregated data was also shared with licensing authorities, local government, and local police, identifying the top five reported venues and providing a summary of all alcohol-related ED presentations (8). The intervention

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commenced with a media release in December 2018. Quarterly letters to venues continued until February 2020 when COVID-19 undermined data collection. Because of a lack of government, police or community buy-in, no VPA was commenced, and the media releases and venue letters were the only active ingredients.

The quarterly media releases summarised reports posted on the website of the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine (see supplementary material) and also linked to the project website. The press releases specifically contained the names of the top three venues associated with ED presentations, along with key data such as the number of presentations by gender and age group.

#### **Patient and Public Involvement Statement**

Given the timeframe of the development and nature of the larger *Driving Change* project methodology, there was no patient nor public involvement in the design of this study.

#### **Ethics Approval**

Ethics approval was obtained from St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (HREC-A 170/16) and Deakin University (DUHREC 2017-178) Human Research Ethics Committees.

#### **Patient and Public Involvement**

Patients and the public were not consulted in this study were not consulted on any aspect of the project. The study was designed in 2015 and started in 2016, when patient engagement was not the norm.

#### Results

#### Descriptives

Table 1 shows the presentation data for the variable used to test the hypotheses set by the protocol article (8).

Table 1	Cases	included	in protocol	analyses
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Variable	Cases during HAH
Total emergency department presentations	23,215 (100%)
Presentations reporting alcohol consumption	3,075 (13.2%)
in the prior 12 hours (% all HAH	
presentations)	
Presentations reporting no alcohol	7,916 (34.1%)
consumption in prior 12 hours* (% all HAH	
presentations)	
S & T injury ICD-10-AM code	5,528 (23.8%)
presentations (% all HAH presentations)	

Note. Not all presentations answered the Last Drinks questions\*

# Time series analysis

# Injury-related presentations

ITS models were used to evaluate the impact of the intervention on the number of injuryrelated (S and T code) presentations during HAH. This was analysed via both the total number of injury-related presentations, and the injury-related presentation rate compared to total ED presentations (Table 2). A significant slope decrease in injury presentation rates was associated with the intervention, however no step change was found. The presentation rate trend can be seen in Figure 1.

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Table 2 Injury trends during HAH in response to intervention

Condition		Lag	Coefficient	р	CI
Count	Time (slope)	1	0.05	0.564	-0.12, 0.22
	Media release (step)		5.20	0.276	-4.29, 14.68
	Time x Media Release		-0.61	0.198	-1.55, 0.33
	(slope)				
Presentation	Presentation Time (slope)		-0.001	0.017	-0.001, -0.0001
Rate	Media release (step)		0.01	0.456	-0.02, 0.03
	Time x Media		-0.002	0.028	-0.004, -0.0002
	Release (slope)				

Figure 1 Injury-related presentation rates during HAH

#### Last Drinks Question identified attendances

ITS models were used to evaluate the impact of the intervention on the number of people reporting alcohol consumption within the last 12 hours during HAH. This was analysed via both the count of people reporting alcohol consumption, and the proportion of people reporting alcohol consumption compared to those that reported none (Table 3). No significant impact was associated with the intervention in either condition. Due to limitations created by the COVID-19 pandemic in the latter stages of the intervention, less than 50 time points were available, which has potentially resulted in the analyses being under powered. The proportion of people reporting alcohol consumption compared to those that reported none trends can be seen in Figure 2.

Table 3 Last drinks presentation trends in response to intervention

Condition		Lag	Coefficient	р	CI
Count	Time (slope)	1	0.46	0.294	-0.44, 1.36
	Media release (step)		-3.07	0.759	-23.90, 17.76
	Time x Media		-1.13	0.402	-3.91, 1.65
	Release (slope)				
Proportion	Time (slope)	1	-0.01	0.009	-0.01, -0.002
of Yes to	Media release (step)		0.05	0.318	-0.05, 0.15
No	Time x Media		-0.001	0.847	-0.01, 0.02
	Release (slope)				

Figure 2 Proportion of alcohol-related presentations to non-alcohol related presentations

#### Venue presentations

Figure 3 shows the number of ED attendances over time that reported having consumed their last drink at the five venues identified in the initial 2018 media release by quarter. When examining by venue, no significant trends in ED presentations were observed at any of the five venues following the intervention.

Figure 3. Last Drinks attendances from venues listed in initial media release, by quarter

#### Discussion

This study examined the introduction an intervention based on the Cardiff Model to address the issue of alcohol-related injuries in the Central Business District of Melbourne, specifically during High Alcohol Hours (HAH). The findings of this study confirmed the effectiveness of this intervention in reducing the alcohol-related presentation rate to the ED Page 17 of 47

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and the proportion of injury-related diagnoses during HAH. The discrepancy between the injury-related presentations and last drinks question presentations may be that the injury protocol had more power to detect small changes. In particular, the number of people reporting recent alcohol consumption during HAHs has been previously shown as a less reliable measure over time (7). The discrepancy between the two results may be that the injury protocol had more power to detect small changes (all presentations had a diagnosis, but only half the people were asked if they had recently consumed alcohol).

The finding that the intervention was associated with a statistically significant decrease in alcohol-related injury presentations is in line with previous research (1). Droste et al (1) found this intervention to be the most effective in terms of Emergency Department based interventions, and this trial provides some support for the previous findings, although the small effect size may be due to the unreliable reporting of trial data in the media (almost no coverage by the third wave of data being released) and poor co-operation of police and the City of Melbourne in the trial. The apparently systemic change in media reporting on alcohol issues since around 2014 has been noted elsewhere (29) and has been attributed to declining independence from the major advertisers: alcohol and gambling. While it is generally recommended that a supporting violence prevention committee be created (17), this was not possible because of a range of self-interest issues. It is likely that the intervention would have had greater impact if there was stronger government agency buy-in as was seen at other sites and internationally.

While the effect sizes found in this trial are comparatively small, the venue specific results reported in Figure 3 also tell an important story in terms of the implementation process and the reality that the initial gains made with media attention were ultimately lost when media outlets stopped reporting results and the venues were no longer being held accountable. Certainly, previous research has shown that existing legislative and other policy responses in

Victoria preside over extremely poor practices of serving patrons while intoxicated; noting that over 80% of people showing 3 or more signs of intoxication were still served alcohol (30-32). In comparison to a regional intervention site within the Last Drinks project (3), this intervention site was solely reliant on media reporting and letter to venues as local police, council and licensing enforcement personal did not engage with the project team in terms of joining a community-based VPA. This is in the context of a state government which has close ties with the local Australian Hotels Association and receives direct political funding from them (33, 34). Future interventions might find better leverage through forming stronger community coalitions which can lobby government as used in other interventions (35).

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#### Limitations

This study has several limitations. The data was collected from a single hospital within the central business district of Melbourne, and although it is the closest to the central city nightlife area where Ambulances are mandated to take patients, it is possible that some alcohol-affected patients would attend other hospitals, especially if injury occurred while travelling home. However, there were no major changes in hospital configurations across Melbourne, nor ambulance protocols during this time, which allows us to assume that any leakage to other hospitals would remain relatively constant over the course of the study. This analysis has focussed on presentations during High Alcohol Hours. HAHs are a proxy for alcohol-related harm, but alcohol-associated injuries can occur at any time. Emergency Departments represent the tip of the iceberg of alcohol-related harm; only the more/most serious cases are taken to hospital. Finally, while patients were asked about the number of drinks consumed in 12h prior to their injury, no objective measure of intoxication was performed, such as breath alcohol concentration (BrAC). Also, in order to lessen the impact

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on ED practice, interrater reliability was not assessed for the present study and was not attempted using triage case-notes due to the unreliable reporting of alcohol data in this form. Future research expanding on this work might attempt to incorporate interrater reliability and data quality measures.

#### Conclusion

Within the limitations described, this data driven intervention appears to have been effective at reducing alcohol-related injuries in this site, and in regional Australia (1). Previous trials across the world have found such data driven interventions effective and efficient with significant implications for public health and safety measures in addressing alcohol-related harm (1, 3, 17, 27, 36). By targeting specific venues and sharing their data, authorities can hold these establishments accountable for the most alcohol-related injuries. This practice encourages responsible practices among venue operators and promoting a safer nightlife environment; a finding which has also been demonstrated when using police-gathered 'last drinks' data (37, 38). Collaborative involvement between healthcare institutions, local law enforcement and licensing authorities allow for informed actions like adjusting operating hours and imposing alcohol-related restrictions and supports World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations on using ED data to proactively mitigate injuries related to alcohol consumption (14, 15).

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#### **Competing Interests Statement**

There are no competing interests for any author

#### **Ethical Approval Statement**

Ethics approval was obtained from St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (HREC-A 170/16) and Deakin University (DUHREC 2017-178) Human Research Ethics Committees.

# Funding statement

The trial described in this protocol has been funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and St Vincent's Health Australia under the Partnership Project scheme 0. K (APP1113693).

#### **Contributorship Statement**

PM led the project, obtained funding and wrote most of the paper. NT conducted analysis and contributed to paper writing. DEW was a chief investigator and contributed to paper writing. KK assisted in data collection, conceptualisation and paper writing. JS was a chief investigator and contributed to paper writing. HA was a lead clinical site contributor and contributed to paper writing. PM is the guarantor author.

# **Patient and Public Involvement**

Patients and the public were not consulted in this study were not consulted on any aspect of the project. The study was designed in 2015 and started in 2016, when patient engagement was not the norm.

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Figure 1 Injury-related presentation rates during HAH

<text> Figure 2 Proportion of alcohol-related presentations to non-alcohol related presentations

Figure 3. Last Drinks attendances from venues listed in initial media release, by quarter





Figure 1 Injury-related presentation rates during HAH



Figure 2 Proportion of alcohol-related presentations to non-alcohol related presentations

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Figure 3. Last Drinks attendances from venues listed in initial media release, by quarter

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Australasian College for Emergency Medicine



#### **MEDIA RELEASE**

# New emergency department data exposes alcohol harm in Melbourne

New emergency department data exposes alcohol harm in Melbourne

New emergency department data exposes the scale of harm from alcohol in Melbourne and the need for the Victorian government to take action, according to the peak body for emergency medicine in Australia.

The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) has released findings from the emergency departments in St Vincent's Hospital and three Monash Health campuses (Clayton, Casey and Dandenong), collected over three months as part of the Driving Change project. Driving Change asks all adults who present to the ED whether they drank alcohol before their attendance, where they bought the alcohol, and the location of the last drink.

The Driving Change data showed that the main reasons for attending the emergency department were for alcohol intoxication, dependence, withdrawal, physical injuries, and suicide ideation. Data shows that dangerous levels of drinking (more than two standard drinks on each occasion) is pervasive across the communities served by the participating hospitals, regardless of age and gender, although men and women aged 45 to 54 were more likely to drink at dangerous levels.

More concerning, almost half of patients (44%) at St Vincent's, and over half (67%) of patients at Monash Health campuses who reported consuming alcohol in the preceding 12 hours had purchased alcohol from packaged liquor outlets such as supermarkets and bottle shops. This is an issue because it enables pre-loading, when drinks can be bought ahead of time while a person is sober, and consumed to excess when no 'safe service' levels apply. This number is also likely to be under-reported because of the number of people who were unable to recall the purchase location, or who were unconscious or refused to respond.

# Monash Health

Over a three month period earlier this year at the 3 participating Monash Health campuses, data collected shows that on Friday and Saturday nights, around 1 in 10 patients were there due to alcohol consumption (compared to an average of almost 1 in 20 https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ip

#### **Injury Prevention**

over the whole week). All told, 7 out of every 10 patients in the ED reported consuming alcohol in the 12 hour period beforehand. These findings continue the trend observed in previous years.

# St Vincent's

Over a three month period late last year at St Vincent's ED, data collected shows that on Friday and Saturday nights, over 1 in 4 patients were there due to alcohol consumption (compared to an average of almost 1 in 10 over the whole week). All told, almost half of patients in the ED who reported consuming alcohol in the 12 hour period beforehand had purchased the alcohol from packaged liquor outlets such as supermarkets and bottle shops.

The mostly commonly reported venues from St Vincent's for last drinks before needing to go to an ED were concentrated among major venues in Melbourne:

- Crown Casino
- Flemington Racecourse
- Melbourne Cricket Ground
- The Forum

# Spring racing carnival

All reports from Flemington Racecourse date from the period around the Spring Carnival in the first half of November 2018. The findings reveal that contrary to most trends that show males are heavier drinkers, over three quarters of presentations from Flemington Racecourse were female.

# Call for action against alcohol harm

ACEM President Dr Simon Judkins said: "Emergency physicians regularly manage the devastating effects of excessive alcohol consumption on individual health, as well as assaults or verbal and physical threats from drunk patients. It is incredibly stressful and confronting to see and have to manage this every weekend. The NT government has demonstrated that alcohol reforms, including setting a minimum floor price, can dramatically reduce ED presentations."

"What is clear is that Australia needs to undertake a cultural shift in its relationship with alcohol. With alcohol being promoted at sporting events, heavy drinking around major events will continue to be a big cause of the problem that contributes to the alcohol harm we see in the ED every day. Regulation is required to tackle the way alcohol is heavily promoted." The <u>Driving Change</u> project is led by Professor Peter Miller at Deakin University, with funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council. In addition to the two EDs in Canberra, there are participating hospitals in Melbourne, Geelong, Sydney and Warrnambool. Central Queensland University, the University of New South Wales, Australian National University and Cardiff University (Wales) are also partners in the project.

More details: Last Drinks

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DATE RELEASED 16 July 2019

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# **HOSPITAL CATCHMENTS**



# AV crews will transport their patient to the designated catchment hospital emergency department unless the patient:

- has a clinical need to attend a different hospital (e.g. major trauma, acute stroke, STEMI where the designated hospital does not have the required services)
- is a child per DHHS criteria (≤15 years old), in which case transport will occur to the closest paediatric-capable ED, except in the case of major trauma
- has relevant history at a different hospital (i.e. investigated/treated for the presenting condition within the last 12 months)
- Is a mental health patient who will need to be transported to the designated Area Mental Health service.

# PHOSPITAL CATCHMENTS

 Injury Prevention





LOCA	LIT	Y INDEX	(	CAULFIELD EAST	ALF	DIAMOND CREEK	AUS	GILDEROY	ANG	KEWI MIST	vent		H PEN	ORMOND	ALF	SILVAN	ANG	TECOMA	ANG	WARRANWOOD	Page
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# PAngliss Hospital Catchment

**Injury Prevention** 















# Peninsula Health Catchment (Rosebud and Franston Hospitals)tion



# PRoval Melbourne Hospital Parkville Catchment

**Injury Prevention** 





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# Sandringham & District Memorial Hospital Catchment Injury Prevention

# PSt Vintcents Hospital Catchment

**Injury Prevention** 









# PT9he Alfred Hospital Catchment

**Injury Prevention** 











# Western Health Catchment (Western Hospital Footscray<sup>®</sup> Williamstown Hospital)

