

Minimum Unit Pricing and Corporate Political Activities in the Northern Territory

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Introduction

Alcohol causes more harm than any other drug in Australia, with the Northern Territory (NT) experiencing the nation's highest rates of alcohol consumption and related harms. Despite strong evidence for population-level alcohol policies such as Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP), these measures often face political and industry opposition. This study examined how alcohol corporate actors engaged with and framed MUP in NT media over the policy's lifecycle (2017–2025).

Methods

We conducted a media analysis of articles featuring statements from alcohol industry corporate actors about MUP in the NT, drawn from news media and industry websites. Using a Corporate Political Activity (CPA) taxonomy and evidentiary practices framework, we examined framing strategies and how these evolved across MUP's implementation, evaluation, and repeal phases.

Results

During the pre- and early implementation phase, industry actors framed MUP as an illegitimate, ineffective, and harmful 'bad solution', claiming it punished responsible consumers, hurt businesses, and breached legal principles. During the mid-implementation period, actors used policy evaluations to mimic scientific critique, misrepresent evidence and delegitimise public health researchers. Following MUP's repeal, industry actors repositioned themselves as responsible partners aligned with government. Throughout, media coverage privileged industry voices over public health perspectives.

Discussion

Corporate actors used sophisticated framing and evidentiary strategies to shape policy – strategies which are often politically contingent and change over time.

Implications

Findings highlight the need for proactive advocacy that communicates the social, health, and economic benefits of evidence-based alcohol policy and anticipates common industry framings.

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