Almost regulated: the state of Australia's alcohol policy regime

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There is a pervasive idea that alcohol in Australia is over-regulated, with discussion of the "nanny state" looming over any regulatory interventions. It is widely accepted though that alcohol is a harmful substance, and thus regulations to minimise alcohol's harms are justifiable and even necessary. This ideal state is far from reality, Australia's alcohol policy regime is deeply fractured on multiple levels, and existing policies prioritise the sale of alcohol ahead of preventing harm or even protecting the alcohol market. Regulators have an impossible task given limited capacity and powers, and the obligations that they enforce seek to punish rather than prevent. But all is not lost, the framework for a strong, functioning regulatory system exists in the skeleton of our current policies. This presentation will outline the issues with Australia's alcohol policy regime, how we got here, and how the system can be salvaged.