Effects of Alcohol Policy on Alcohol related harm in Alice Springs, 2015 to 2025

Update: December 2025

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CONGRESS
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION ICN 7823

Key Findings (see below and graphs for details)[1]

Alcohol regulations introduced in 2023 are continuing to reduce alcohol-related harm in Alice Springs. Since their introduction, we have seen:

- **a considerable reduction in alcohol sales / consumption, down 26% compared to the previous period before a slight increase (2%) in the 2nd quarter of 2025**
- **a major reduction in alcohol-related Domestic Violence Assaults (down by 43% from February 2023 to February 2025 and a further 14% from March 2025 to September 2025**
- **considerable reductions in alcohol-related presentations at Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department (ASH ED), down 25% from February 2023 to February 2025 and a further 14% from March 2025 to September 2025**

The removal of the legislated Minimum Unit Price (MUP) for alcohol from 1 March 2025 has so far not been associated with a rise in rates of harm, which have continued to fall. However, note that:

- **under the Alice Springs Liquor Accord, most alcohol retailers in Alice Springs have endorsed a voluntary $1.30 MUP, thus effectively continuing the previously legislated MUP**
- **figures for the period after the removal of the MUP are for the period March to September 2025 and may not take into account seasonality of alcohol consumption and harms.**

Effects of regulations on alcohol consumption (Graph 1, Graph 2)

1. Quarterly alcohol wholesale data[2] provides an estimate of alcohol consumption in Alice Springs. The latest data shows that alcohol consumption fell 26% after the regulations were introduced, compared to the previous period after the removal of the *Stronger Futures* 'dry area' provisions.

2. The latest data includes three months (April to June 2025) where the legislated Minimum Unit Price (MUP) had been removed. While this period shows a slight (2%) increase in sales it is too early to estimate the effect of the removal of the MUP on consumption, noting too the effect of the voluntary Alice Springs Liquor Accord and the seasonality of alcohol consumption.

3. Despite the slight rise, the latest consumption figures (71,037 litres of pure alcohol in the 2nd Quarter of 2025) are the lowest on record for this period of the year[3].

4. Wholesale data gives a picture of regional, population-level consumption. It cannot be used to monitor the sales of individual outlets, some of which may contribute disproportionately to consumption and to harms.

Effects of reforms on alcohol-related domestic violence (Graph 3, Graph 4)

5. The effects of alcohol policy changes can also be tracked through the NT Police crime statistics[4]. These show that:

   - **the alcohol related reforms of 2017-19**[5] were associated with a reduction in sales / consumption of 9% and a fall of 21% in alcohol-related Domestic Violence assaults in Alice Springs. The reforms included the introduction of a legislated Minimum Unit Price (MUP) of $1.30 per standard drink to remove cheap and dangerous alcohol from sale
   - **the expiry of Stronger Futures provisions in July 2022** removed 'dry areas' provisions which led to a significant increase in both consumption (up 15%) and alcohol-related domestic violence (which almost doubled during this period, up 93%)
   - **the introduction of new regulations in early 2023**[6] saw the number of alcohol-related Domestic Violence assaults fall by 43%, demonstrating that the regulations had a major effect on reducing alcohol-related harms in the town
   - **the removal of the legislated MUP from 1 March 2025**[7] appears to be associated with continued falls in alcohol-related DV (down 14%) and alcohol-related ED presentations (down 13%). However, note that:

     a. almost all alcohol retailers in Alice Springs have endorsed an Alice Springs Liquor Accord which includes a voluntary $1.30 MUP[8]. While the Accord is observed by retailers, the MUP is effectively still in place;

     b. figures for the period after the removal of the MUP are for March to September 2025. Given the seasonal nature of consumption / harms in Alice Springs a longer period will be required to assess the effect of the removal of the MUP.

Alcohol-related Emergency Department presentations (Graph 5, Graph 6)

6. One of the strongest sources of evidence for alcohol-related harm is the number of alcohol-related ED presentations. The number of alcohol-related presentations at ASH ED fell by 25% after the introduction of the alcohol regulations in early 2023[9].

7. For the period March 2025 to September 2025, the number of alcohol-related presentations has fallen a further 13% to 361 per month.

Addressing the drivers of alcohol-related harm

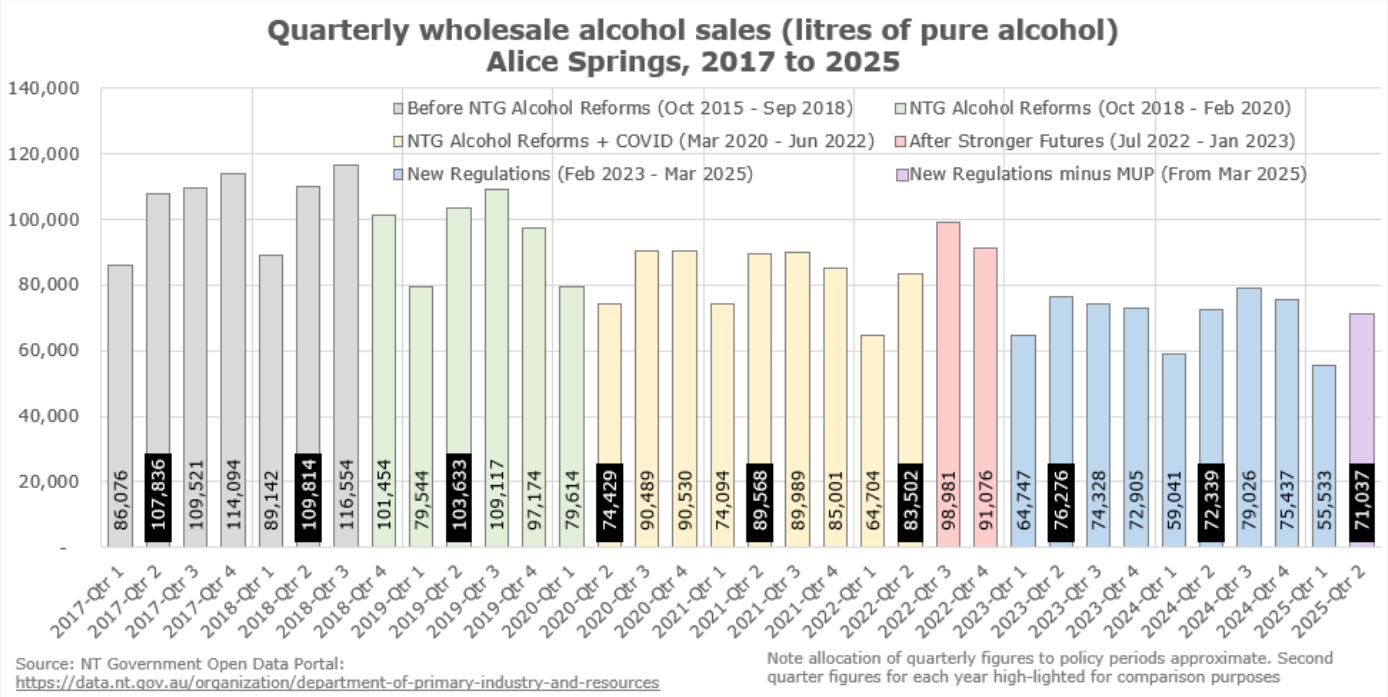
8. Alcohol supply regulation alone will not solve the issue of alcohol-related harm in Central Australia, including gendered violence, which will require **both**

   a. sustained action to address the drivers of destructive drinking and violence such as intergenerational trauma, poverty, inequality, poor education, gender inequality and discrimination; **and**

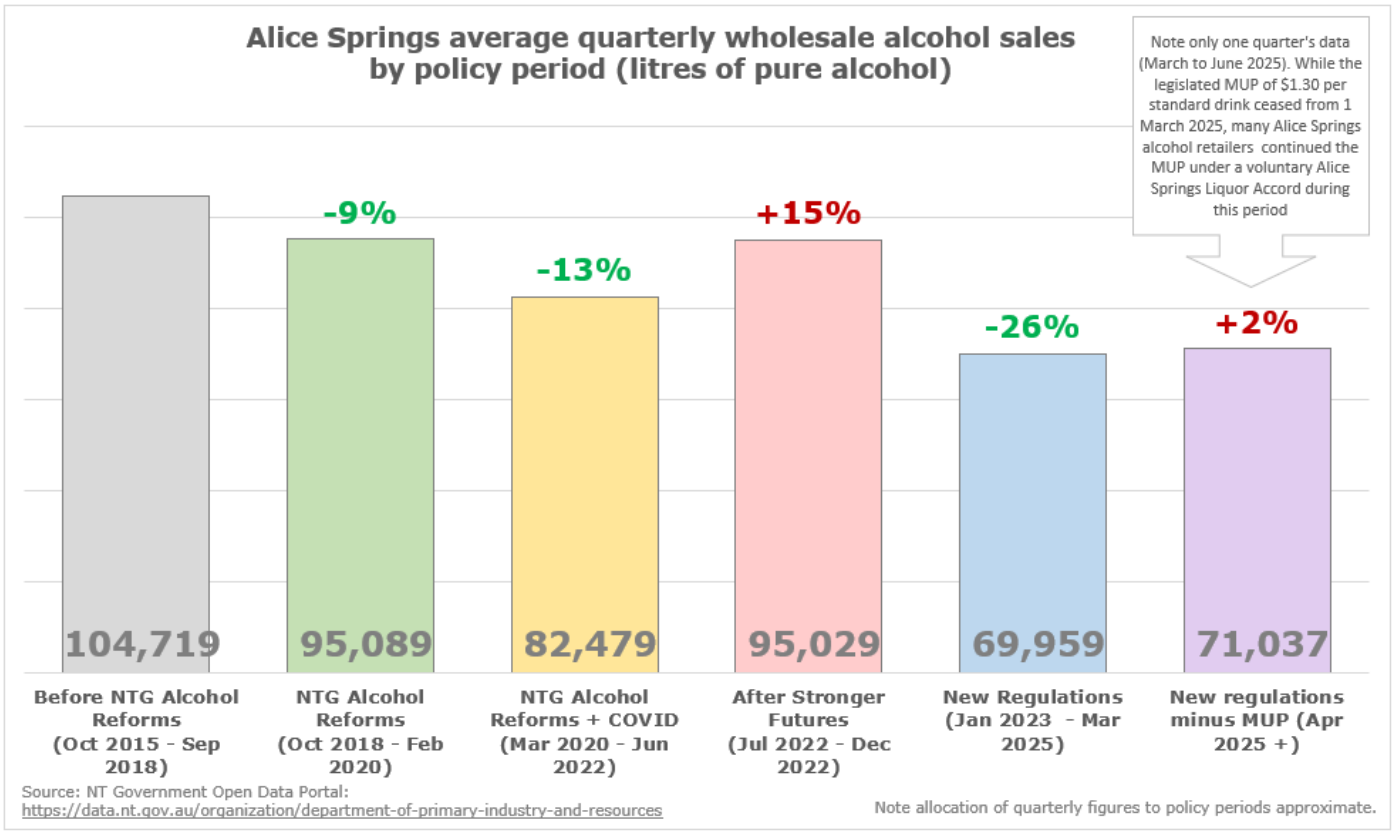
   b. regulating the availability of alcohol to break the cycle of violence and keep Alice Springs residents, families, visitors and businesses safe.

Wholesale alcohol sales (consumption)

Graph 1

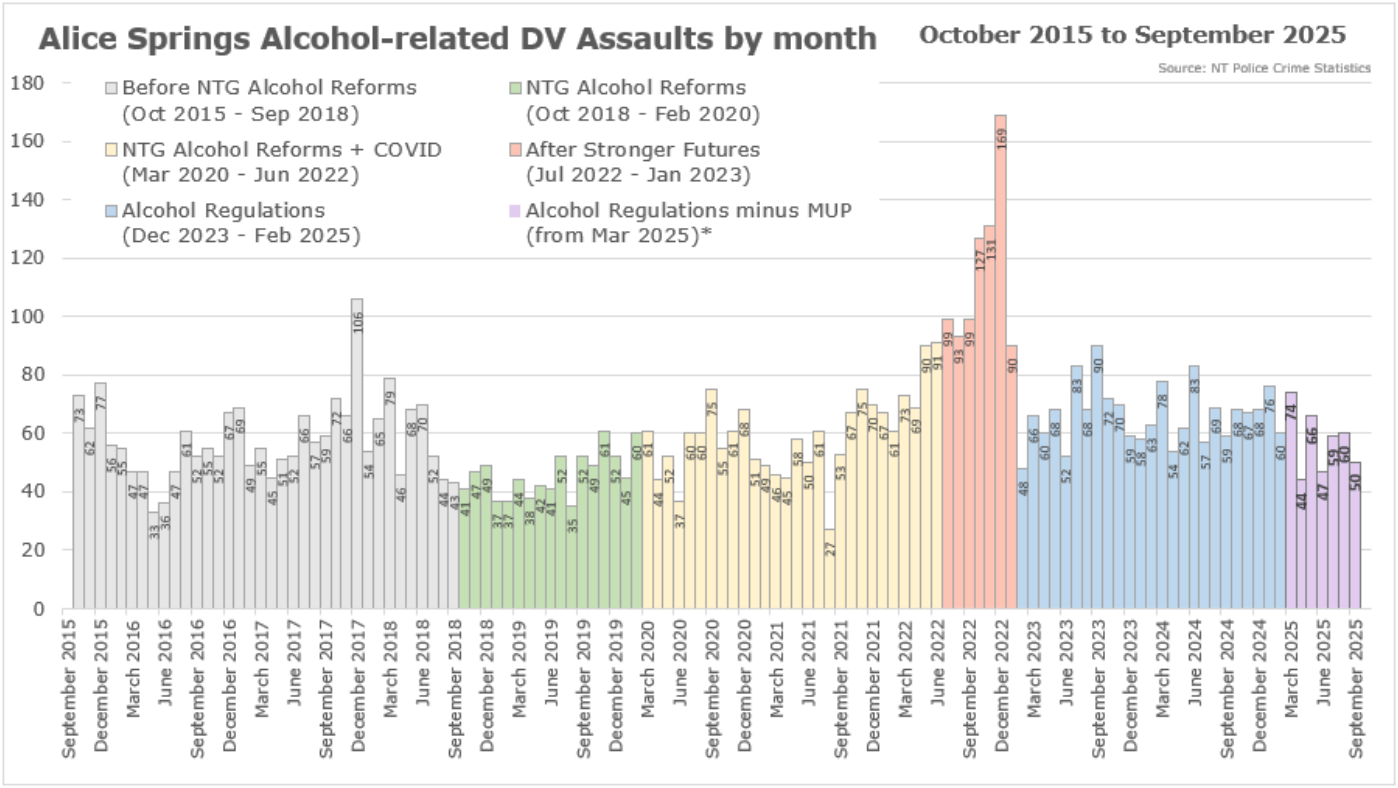


Graph 2

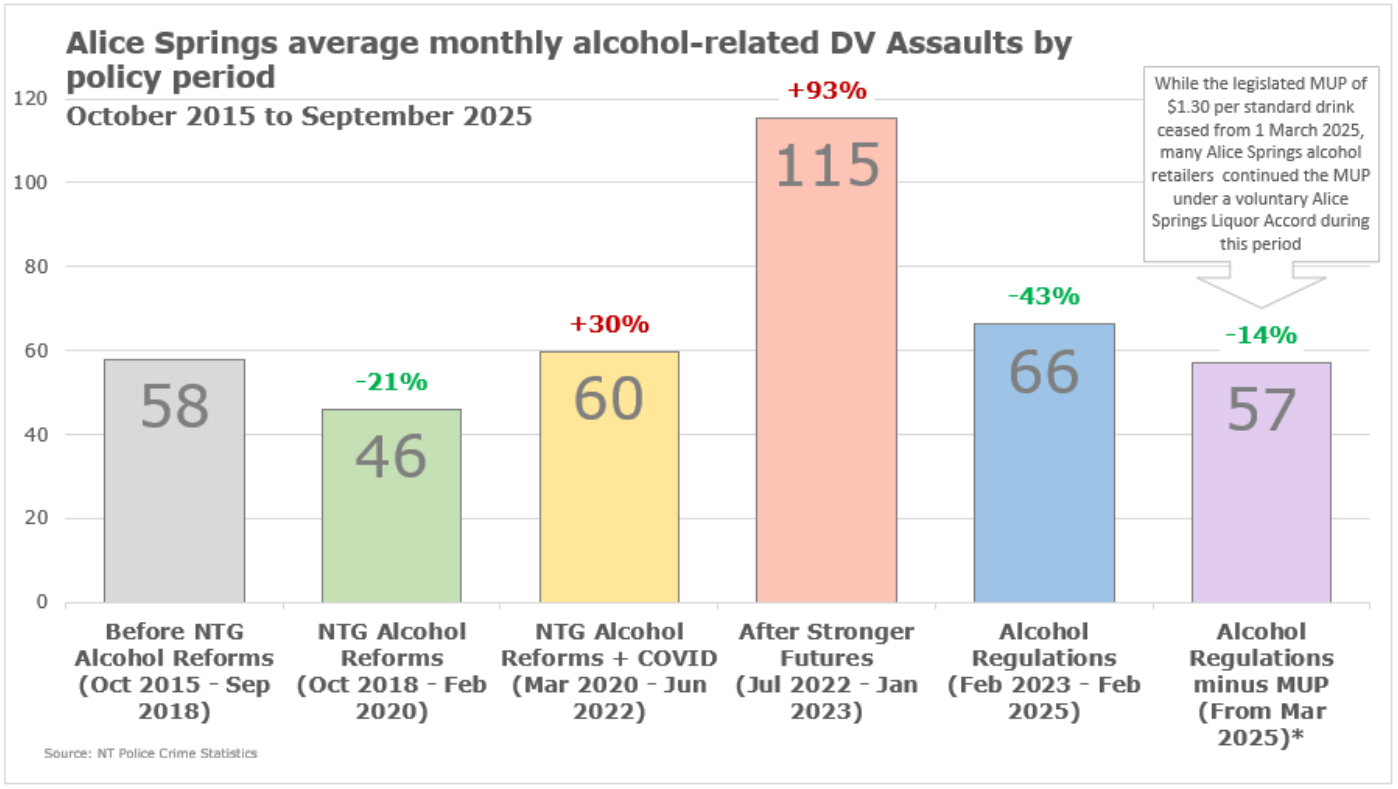


Alcohol-related Domestic Violence Assaults

Graph 3

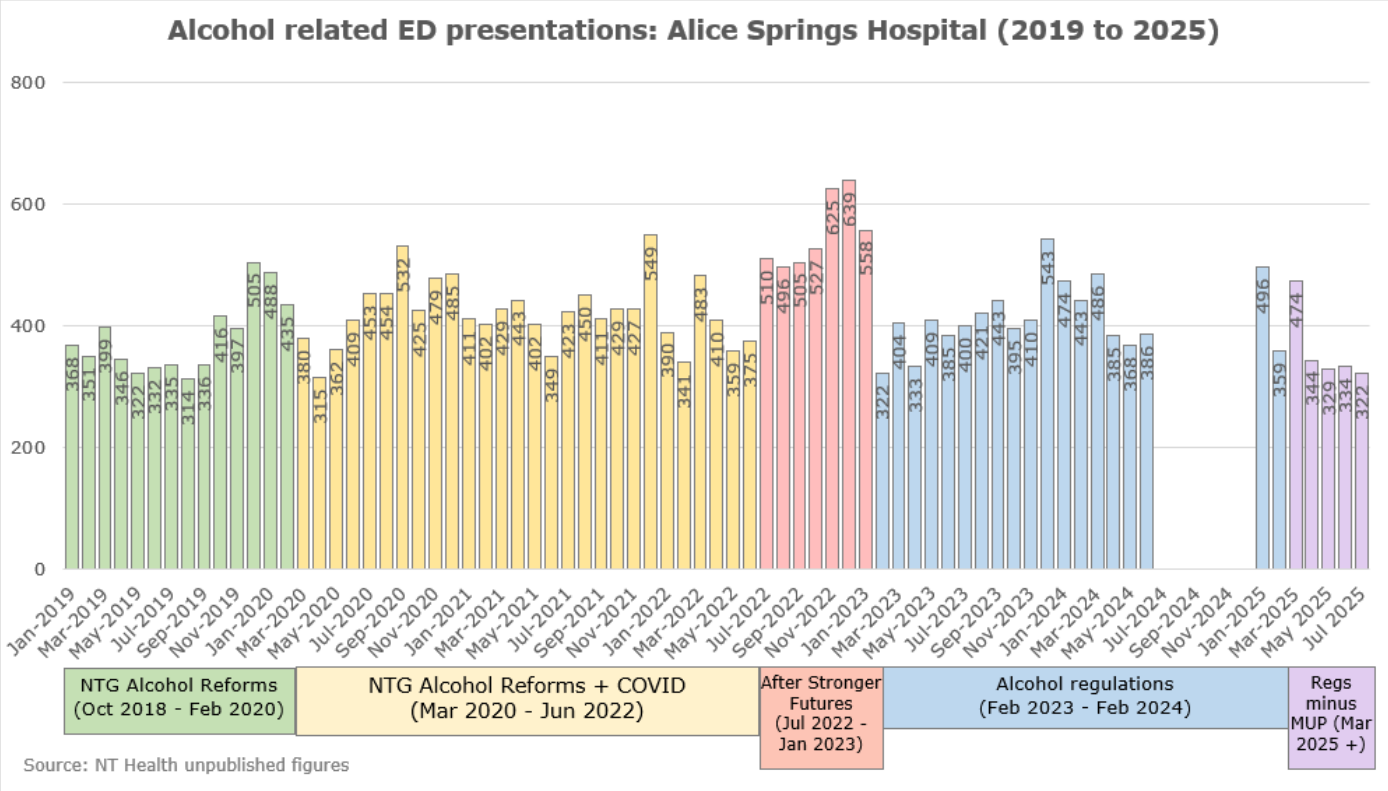


Graph 4

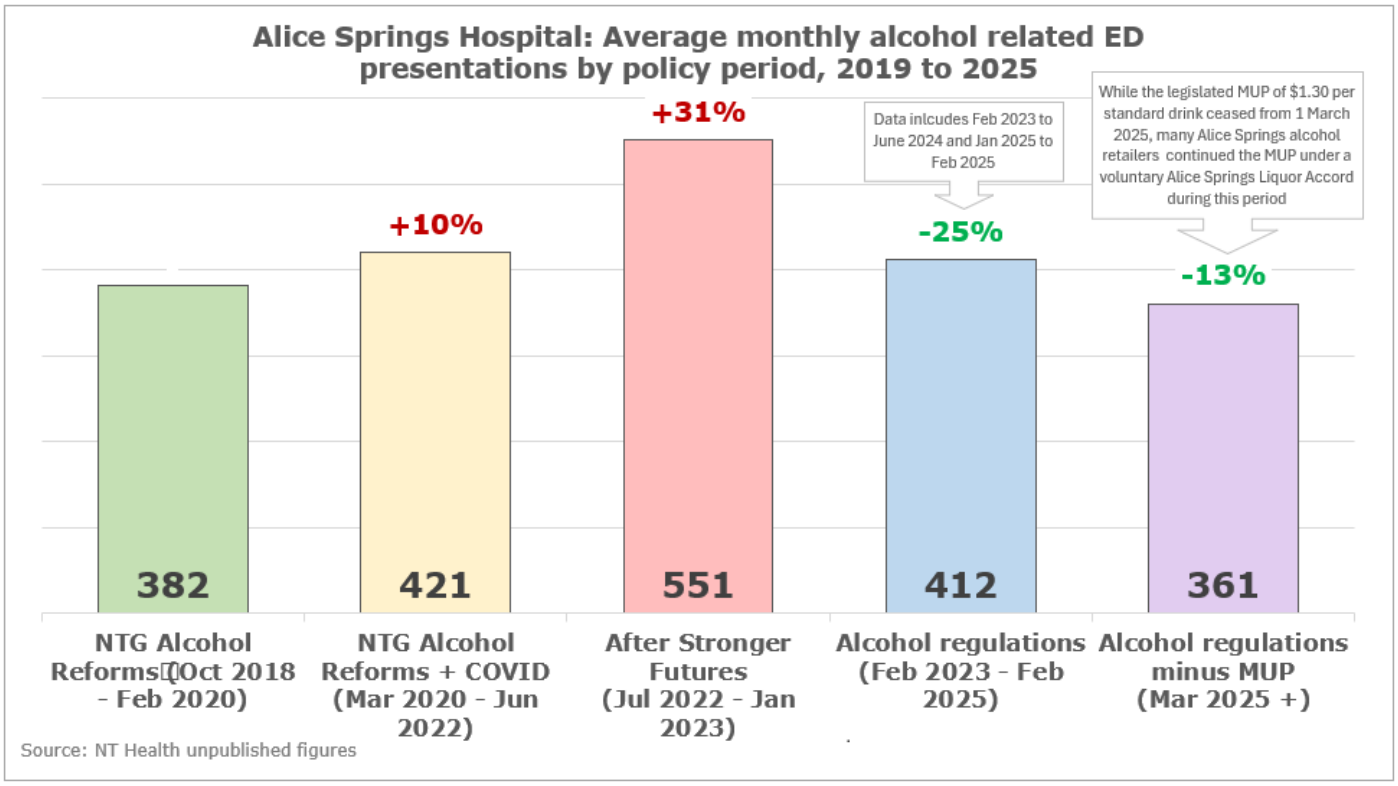


Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department presentations

Graph 5



Graph 6



NOTES

[1] This report is based on the latest available figures as follows:

- alcohol sales/consumption data to June 2025 (Quarter 2, 2025)
- monthly Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department data to June 2024, and then from January 2025 to July 2025.
- Police crime statistics to September 2025.

[2] https://data.nt.gov.au/dataset/wholesale-alcohol-supply-june-2024

[3] Sales figures include all sales, so reduced tourist numbers during COVID will have had an effect. The failure of interstate and international tourist numbers to fully recover post-COVID will have many causes which are beyond the scope of this analysis. However, it is reasonable to consider that one of those causes will have been the negative national and international publicity surrounding alcohol-related violence in Alice Springs.

[4] All data from https://pfes.nt.gov.au/police/community-safety/nt-crime-statistics/statistical-publications. Note that following the implementation of the NT Police SerPro system on 27 November 2023, the crime statistics from December 2023 onwards have been determined to be not comparable with earlier published NT crime statistics.

[5] In 2017-19, the Northern Territory Government introduced a range of alcohol reforms to deal with high levels of alcohol-related harm. These included:

- a Banned Drinkers Register (BDR) to reduce access to take-away alcohol by problem drinkers (September 2017),
- Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors (PALIs) at bottle shops in Alice Springs (2018),
- a Minimum Unit Price of $1.30 per standard drink to prevent the sale of cheap alcohol (October 2018), and
- a new *Liquor Act* that included risk-based licencing and greater monitoring of on-licence drinking (2019).

[6] On 25 January 2023 the Northern Territory Chief Minister announced regulations on take away alcohol availability in Alice Springs including:

- One sale per day per person, following industry guidance
- Alcohol free days on Monday and Tuesday for takeaway purchases
- Limiting hours of alcohol being sold between 3pm-7pm, except for on Saturdays.

This was followed on 16 February 2023 by legislation taking effect whereby Aboriginal town camps and communities reverted to being 'dry' zones, after such regulations were removed with the expiry of *Stronger Futures* provisions in July 2022. The new 'dry area' provisions will remain in place until 2027, pending decisions by those communities to develop Community Alcohol Plans and opt-out of the regulations.

[7] https://dth.nt.gov.au/publications/racing-gaming-and-licensing/floor-price

[8] https://nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/485911/alice-springs-liquor-accord.pdf

[9] Noting that this data is for the period February 2023 to June 2024 and January 2025 to February 2025.