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Title:

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Date:

2025-06-01

Citation:

Platts, C. & Lacy-Nichols, J. (2025). Mapping corporate sponsorship of alcohol and gambling associations: An Australian pilot study. *Addiction*, 120 (6), pp.1156-1166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16775>.

Persistent Link:

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Mapping corporate sponsorship of alcohol and gambling associations: An Australian pilot study

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Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Abstract

Background and Aims: Alcohol and gambling industries use a range of strategies to oppose and undermine public health policies targeting their industries. Industry associations often play a visible role in advancing alcohol and gambling industry interests, yet there are few studies analysing who their members or partners are and the relationships between them. Our study developed an approach to map the landscape of Australian alcohol and gambling associations, their members and partners and the connections between commercial actors.

Methods: We conducted our study in four phases: first, we systematically searched for alcohol and gambling industry associations; second, we identified and classified association members and/or partners; third, we mapped three types of relationships between associations and members/partners (umbrella associations, co-location and joint membership/partnerships); lastly, we analysed the disclosures of the members and partners of the Australian Hotels Associations and Clubs Associations.

Results: We identified 126 industry associations and 1486 unique companies/organisations from multiple industry sectors that were members/partners. Only 75 (59.5%) associations provided a list of members/partners. Most companies/organisations were partners of only one association ($n = 1218$), while five companies were partners of more than 20 associations. Concerning relationships, we identified five national clusters, 27 instances of co-location and an extensive network linking associations through shared partnerships. Finally, we assessed 658 relationships between Hotels and Clubs Associations and their partners, of which only 91 (13.8%) were transparently disclosed.

Conclusions: In Australia, many alcohol and gambling industry associations do not disclose their members or corporate partners and provide limited funding information. Members and corporate partners of Australian alcohol and gambling industry associations rarely disclose their support and are diverse in focus, size, members, partners, purpose and activities.

KEYWORDS

alcohol industry, commercial determinants of health, gambling industry, networks, partnership, peak body, sponsorship, third party group, transparency

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INTRODUCTION

The most ambitious policies to reduce the burden of chronic diseases threaten the profits of harmful industries like tobacco and alcohol. To protect their profits and interests, these industries (like other industry sectors facing regulation) engage in a range of strategies to block, delay and undermine public health policies. This includes disputing and influencing scientific evidence, threatening and discrediting public health advocates and acquiring and using political influence [1–4]. Yet these overt and confrontational opposition strategies come with reputational risks [5]. Partly because of this, industry associations and lobby groups sometimes play a more active (and visible) role in challenging public health policies [1, 6].

To support public health advocates and organisations, and to protect policymaking from harmful industry opposition and advance public health, we need to develop a deeper understanding of the landscape of harmful industry interests, their resources and their networks. Mapping this diverse coalition of commercial allies aligns with calls from scholars and practitioners of the commercial determinants of health (CDoH) to more closely scrutinise the breadth of actors whose interests intersect with harmful industries, but may not be conceptualised as harmful industries themselves [7]. In the case of industry associations, this includes the potentially diverse cohort of their members, partners and sponsors who – through their affiliation with the association – may indirectly support the political activities of harmful industries. This study looks at two closely connected industry sectors in Australia – alcohol and gambling – to pilot an approach to systematically map the network of harmful industry interests and their allies. Although our approach focuses on the alcohol and gambling sectors in Australia, our methods could be applied to any industry sector or country context, and we reflect on opportunities to expand on our study in the discussion.

Alcohol and gambling in Australia – an economic and political powerhouse

The social and economic costs of the alcohol and gambling industries in Australia are staggering. Australians lose around AU\$25 billion annually on gambling – dwarfing all other countries in this regard [8]. The social cost of alcohol harms was estimated to be more than AU\$66 billion in 2017–18 [9]. Moreover, these harms are concentrated disproportionately amongst poorer, vulnerable groups, who are targeted with aggressive marketing including data-driven digital campaigns that can target specific and potentially vulnerable audiences, such as high-volume consumers [10, 11]. Yet there are few public health policies to protect communities from harm. This is not because of a lack of ambition or effort on the part of public health advocates [12, 13]. Rather, alcohol and gambling industries are deeply entrenched in the Australian economy and politics, stymying efforts for truly effective policy action.

In 2018, the alcohol industry was estimated to have contributed more than AU\$158 billion annually to the Australian economy, with

AU\$6.5 billion going directly to the government through taxation [14]. In 2022–23, gambling taxes raised around AU\$9 billion dollars for the Australian government, and a comparison with Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that that an average of 8% of state government revenue came from gambling [15, 16]. In political science, these contributions to the economy are often described as a source of structural power, where political decisions may favour the business without any lobbying or direct political influence required [17, 18]. Indeed, Livingstone and Adams argue that the power of the gambling industry in Australia is only made possible with state collusion [19].

Limited political will to regulate the alcohol and gambling industries is exacerbated by intensive lobbying and campaign financing across all federal, state and territory governments [2, 20, 21]. In 2020–21, alcohol and gambling companies gave more than AU\$2 million to Australian political parties [22]. Between July 2014 and December 2020, ministerial diaries in New South Wales recorded 331 meetings with gambling interests and 158 meetings with alcohol interests [21]. A 2023 investigation found that the gambling industry ‘wined and dined’ the minister responsible for their portfolio while a proposal to strongly regulate online gambling advertising was under review [23].

Although alcohol and gambling companies will engage in political activities directly, they also use third party groups to do so, such as industry associations or professional lobby firms [24]. These groups provide multiple benefits to companies. For regulatory threats that target the sector broadly – such as warning labels on alcohol products – companies can join forces and pool resources to oppose the policy. Industry associations often have large memberships, amplifying their political influence as a coalition [25]. And finally, industry associations have been shown to be more vocal on controversial topics, allowing individual companies to protect their reputations and avoid public scrutiny [6, 26, 27].

Industry associations have been active in Australia since the 1800s [28]. They are variably structured and can appear as not-for-profit organisations, research organisations, education and training organisations or as lobby groups. In the case of the alcohol and gambling sectors, some have played an active role in opposing public health policies. For instance, in 2010, Clubs New South Wales (Clubs NSW) successfully opposed the gambling reforms proposed by the Gillard government, coordinating rallies and denouncing the reforms as ‘un-Australian’. In the 2 years following the campaign, they donated almost AU\$4.5 million to major political parties [20]. Pregnancy warning labels on alcohol products were recommended in 2011, yet the alcohol industry delayed implementation of this public health measure for more than a decade, launching a range of initiatives through the industry-funded group Drinkwise [12, 29, 30]. These activities emphasise the need for public health advocates to develop a better understanding of industry associations and their corporate members, so that the public health community is better equipped to challenge the influence of harmful industry actors.

Industry associations are often politically influential, yet there are few studies analysing who their specific members or partners are and the relationships between them. This question sits at the

intersection of public health (especially CDoH) and political science scholarship. Public health researchers have focused more on the activities and influence of specific interest groups (often via case studies) [2, 31, 32]. In contrast, political science scholars have analysed industry associations as part of their broader focus on interest groups, with substantial attention devoted to the question of mapping the 'system' of organised interests [33]. This research has predominantly occurred in the USA and Europe, including the groundbreaking population ecology work of Gray and Lowery [34]. In Australia, Fraussen and Halpin [35] have sought to estimate the size, composition and diversity of the national interest group community. In their study they classified the industry sectors of the interest groups, but did not explore the specific make-up of each group.

Our study seeks to build on previous analyses of interest groups and interrogate their composition at a more granular level. This is important to consider, as depending on the type of interest group, they may have a more or less diverse membership. Peak bodies, for instance, often represent a vast range of economic actors, whereas industry associations often have a narrower remit. Further, some companies may choose not to align themselves with industry associations or prioritise other forms of political engagement. From a CDoH perspective, it is important to understand the resources and influence of industry associations, so that more targeted campaigns to counter their political influence can be developed [7, 36]. To this end, we were further interested in the question of transparency and disclosure (both from associations and from their members/partners). Considering the sometimes aggressive strategies used by some associations, some companies may seek to distance themselves from associations to protect their reputation [6]. We asked the following questions. What organisations represent alcohol and/or gambling interests in Australia? Do they disclose their members and/or partners (and vice versa)? What are the networks connecting associations and members/partners? Our study aims to provide insights into the breadth of companies that are connected to alcohol and gambling industry associations.

METHODS

We conducted our study in four phases: (1) identify and classify industry associations; (2) identify and classify association members or partners; (3) map relationships between associations and members/partners; and (4) analyse member/partner disclosures.

Phase 1: Identify and classify associations

To identify relevant industry associations we conducted a rapid scoping review, using an approach modified from that of Godin *et al.* [37] for reviewing grey literature. Three sources were searched: Google Advanced Searches, peer-reviewed databases and business databases. Search strategies were developed based on the following key terms: Australia, Association, Alcohol, Gambling, Racing and Venue. These

TABLE 1 Inclusion criteria for industry associations.

1	Organisation that represents the interests of an industry (or group of industries)
2	Membership/sponsorship/partnership model
3	At least one alcohol or gambling industry member/sponsor/partner (e.g. a manufacturer, producer or association)
4	Located in Australia

searches were performed between October 2022 and February 2023 within the bounds of a master's research capstone project. Our search strategies are detailed in Appendix S1.

Following the initial searches, a preliminary list of 187 associations were identified. All associations were reviewed to: (1) confirm whether they currently existed with a website; and (2) determine whether they fit our inclusion criteria for being an alcohol or gambling industry association (Table 1). Our criteria were drawn from the definition of industry associations given by Watkins *et al.* [38] as 'member-based organisations that represent the interests of a particular industry'. Based on our initial assessment of industry associations, we also considered groups with a sponsorship or partnership model if the purpose of the organisation was to support the alcohol or gambling industry. Although these models are slightly different, for readability we use the term 'partner' from here onwards as this was the most common model in our data set. We included the state and territory racing authorities as well as their national peak bodies, as they engaged in advocacy activities and had gambling company partners.

For each association, we searched for a website (sometimes identified in the source documents) or performed a Google search. Several associations were found to have changed their names over time, and earlier versions were flagged as duplicates. Associations without easily identifiable websites (determined by reviewing the first two pages of Google results) were flagged as inactive. To review whether the association represented alcohol and/or gambling industry interests, we reviewed the 'about us' (or equivalent) page, partnership page and policy page. Searches using the website search bar for the terms 'alcohol' and 'gambling' were also performed. During this search, we identified several additional associations that we added to our list.

For each included association, we collected information about their attributes (if available), including: homepage URL; address, post-code and state; date the association was formed and/or ended; whether the association publicly disclosed their annual report; whether they had a password-protected 'members area'; and whether they publicly disclosed a list of their members/sponsors/partners. Each association was categorised into an industry category of 'alcohol', 'gambling', 'both' or 'multiple', depending on its declared mission statement or the industry sector of their members/sponsors/partners.

Phase 2: Identify and classify partners

To identify the partners for each association, we searched the home page of each association and reviewed the main search bars for terms

including ‘sponsors’, ‘members’, ‘partners’ and ‘our people’. If available, we documented the URL where partners were listed and took a screenshot of the webpage as a source reference. Several of the clubs associations listed club members as well as corporate partners (e.g. Surf Lifesavers Australia, a community club, vs Aristocrat, a gambling company). In such cases, the corporate partners supporting the association were documented rather than the individual clubs themselves (often numbering in the hundreds or thousands). All named partners were documented in an Excel spreadsheet.

Many of the identified partners were the same company but listed differently (e.g. Carlton & United Breweries; Carlton and United Breweries; Carlton and United Breweries Premium Beverages; CUB Premium Beverages). To match companies and simplify this list, we used Open AI to review the list and identify the company website and industry sector. We manually reviewed the matches and classified partners into five groups: alcohol, gambling, both (alcohol and gambling), government and other. For partners that were unclear, we classified these as other. Partners classified as alcohol included: companies that manufactured alcohol; breweries and wineries; alcohol retailers; hotels and bars; and alcohol associations. Partners classified as gambling included: casinos; clubs, including Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) clubs; lotteries; gaming companies; gaming technology; horse and greyhound breeders; and gambling associations. We note that many hotels and bars also have gambling facilities, but it was beyond the scope of this study to determine which, and thus the partners classified as ‘both’ are likely to represent an underestimation of the gambling sector.

Phase 3: Map relationships between associations and partners

To explore the relationships between associations, we conducted an exploratory analysis to identify ‘parent’ and ‘child’ relationships between associations. This was achieved by reviewing the websites of associations with similar names (e.g. Clubs Australia and Clubs Queensland) or clear regional affiliations (e.g. Racing New South Wales and Racing Australia) to confirm whether a parent organisation or national body was identified. We were interested not in affiliated associations (e.g. those that may collaborate on campaigns), but specifically ‘parent’ associations that had a level of strategic or organisational control or influence over the ‘child’ association. We also reviewed the listed addresses for associations, documenting all instances of co-location (listing the same address). We have tried our best to identify relationships between national and state branches of associations; however, it is possible that there are additional relationships that further research could identify.

We also analysed the relationships between associations by exploring the network of partners connected with more than one association. We used GEPHI network analysis software (<https://gephi.org>) to create a network graph of associations and partners and measured their betweenness centrality, a measure of their relative importance in and degree of connectedness to the network.

Phase 4: Rates of partnership disclosure

To assess whether partners were transparent about their relationships with alcohol and gambling associations, we analysed the disclosure practices around two prominent and politically active association groups: clubs and hotels associations and their state and territory branches. We first documented the ‘level’ of each partner (e.g. corporate partner, silver partner, gold sponsor) and the partner website (often linked to from the associations’ list of partners). If the partner’s website was not provided, we conducted a Google search of the partner’s name and reviewed the partner’s logo listed by the association to verify the website. For each partner’s website, we searched the home, about and partnership pages. We then used the website search tool to search for the ‘association name’. Lastly, we conducted a Google search for (‘association name’ AND ‘partner name’), reviewing the first 10 results for a source originating from the partner’s webpage. Searches were conducted in May–August 2023.

We classified partners as not disclosing, disclosing or partially disclosing sponsorship. Partners were classified as not disclosing if the above searches did not yield results. A partial disclosure was where the partner mentioned the association by name (e.g. in a blog post or annual report), but did not explicitly refer to their partnership arrangement. We considered a full disclosure when the name and/or logo of the association was prominently displayed on the home, about or partnership pages of the partner, often with the logo of the association or phrase ‘partner/sponsor of’ or equivalent.

Power BI (Microsoft, Redmond, WA, USA) and the open-source tool SankeyMATIC (<https://sankeymatic.com>) were used to analyse and visualise the data. These findings are presented below.

RESULTS

We identified 126 industry associations and 1486 unique partner organisations. Most associations represented the alcohol industry (62), followed by gambling (33), both (25) and those representing multiple industries (5). We identified most associations through grey literature searches, with the peer-reviewed literature only naming 13 associations, with the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) the most frequent (cited in 12 articles, see Appendix S1). Instead, academic articles referred to associations collectively, e.g. as ‘industry associations’ or ‘interest groups’.

Association disclosures of their partners varied across the associations, with only 75 (59.5%) providing a list of partners. All five associations representing multiple industries had a public list of partners. In contrast, only 27 (43.5%) alcohol associations and 20 (62.5%) gambling associations disclosed their partners.

It was challenging to identify key pieces of information for associations. Fifty-nine (46.8%) associations had a portal for members, where we assume further information about the association and its activities would be hosted. Few associations had an annual report that was publicly accessible, and information about revenue sources and

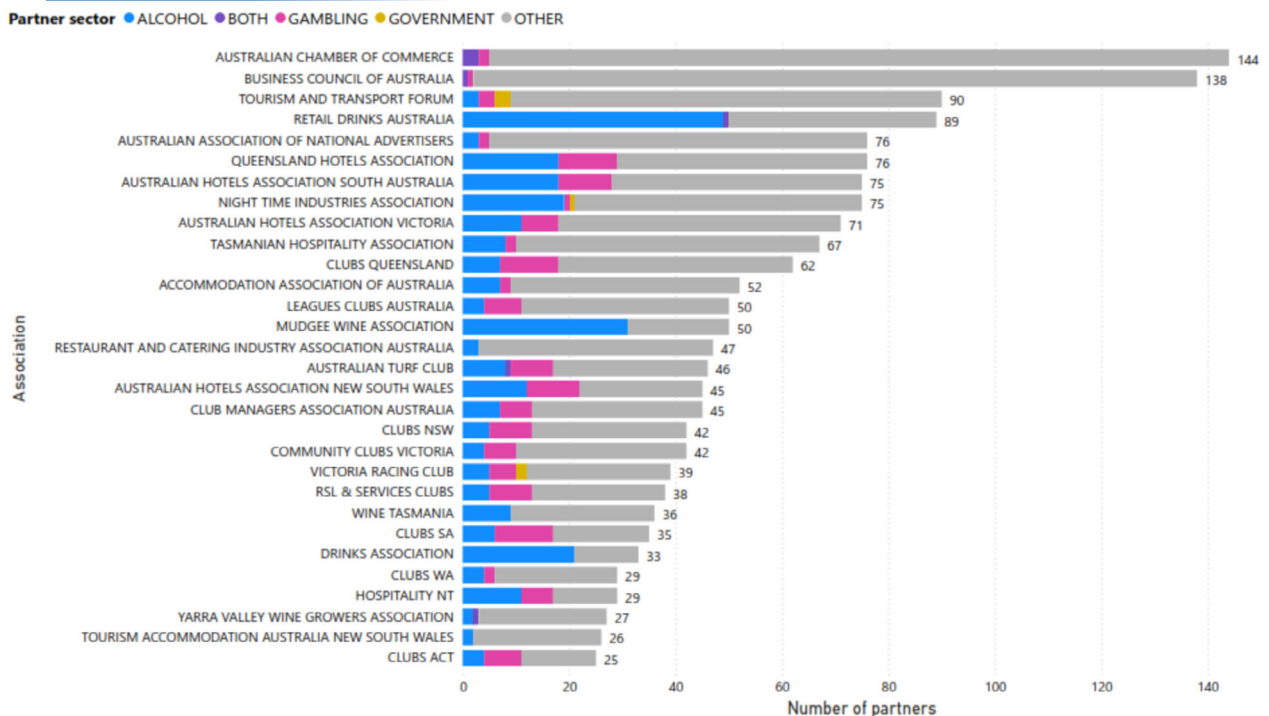


FIGURE 1 Top 30 industry associations with the most partners.

expenditure were often vague generalisations, such as ‘memberships’, ‘grants’ and ‘donations’. Ninety-four (74.6%) associations listed a contact address or PO box. Of these, 28 were in New South Wales, 22 were in Victoria, 17 in South Australia, 12 in Western Australia, six in the Australian Capital Territory, and three each in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

Of the 1486 unique partners identified, 216 (14.5%) were from the alcohol industry, 89 (6.0%) were from the gambling industry, six (0.4%) were from both alcohol and gambling industries, 11 (0.7%) were government bodies and 1164 (78.3%) were from other industries not directly connected with alcohol and gambling. These included industries such as health, finance, construction, law, entertainment and telecommunications. The two associations with the most partners were the Australian Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of Australia, although we note that these represent business interests in general, not just alcohol and gambling.

Some associations had predominantly alcohol or gambling organisations as partners, whereas others were more mixed (Figure 1). Two associations had only alcohol industry partners (Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia and Brewers Association of Australia) and four had only gambling industry partners (Greyhounds Australasia, Racing Australia, Responsible Wagering Australia and Racing Queensland).

Most organisations were partners of only one association ($n = 1218$), whereas a smaller number of organisations were partnered with several associations. Seventeen were partners of 10 or more associations and five companies were partners of more than 20 associations: Carlton and United Breweries (24), Lion (24), Tabcorp (23), Coca-Cola

(22) and Treasury Wine Estates (21) (Figure 2). In some cases, the same company would sponsor an association twice via different business units (e.g. Carlton and United Breweries and Carlton and United Breweries Premium Beverages were listed as separate sponsors of some of the hotels associations). If counted separately, Carlton and United Breweries and its affiliated business entities provided significantly more sponsorship ($n = 33$), followed by Coca-Cola ($n = 25$).

We identified three types of connections between industry associations: national clusters, co-location and shared partnerships. First, some associations had a national state/territory division structure, with the national association governing or providing strategic direction to the state and territory divisions (Figure 3). Our analysis identified five clusters: AHA (11 state and territory divisions), Clubs Australia (8), Racing Australia (8), Greyhounds Australasia (7) and Australian Distillers Association (5).

Second, we identified 27 associations who shared an address with one or more associations. There were five examples of national/state divisions sharing an address: Racing Australia/Racing Victoria; AHA/AHA Australian Capital Territory; Clubs Australia/Clubs New South Wales; Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA)/TAA New South Wales; TAA Victoria/AHA Victoria. The Tasmanian Hospitality Association and Clubs Tasmania also shared an address (as well as a website). In other cases, we could not identify a formal link between the associations, yet they listed the same address. For example, the Australian Distillers Association, Alcohol Beverages Australia and Spirits and Cocktails Australia shared an address in Sydney, and the Brewers Association of Australia shared an address in Canberra with AHA and AHA Australian Capital Territory.

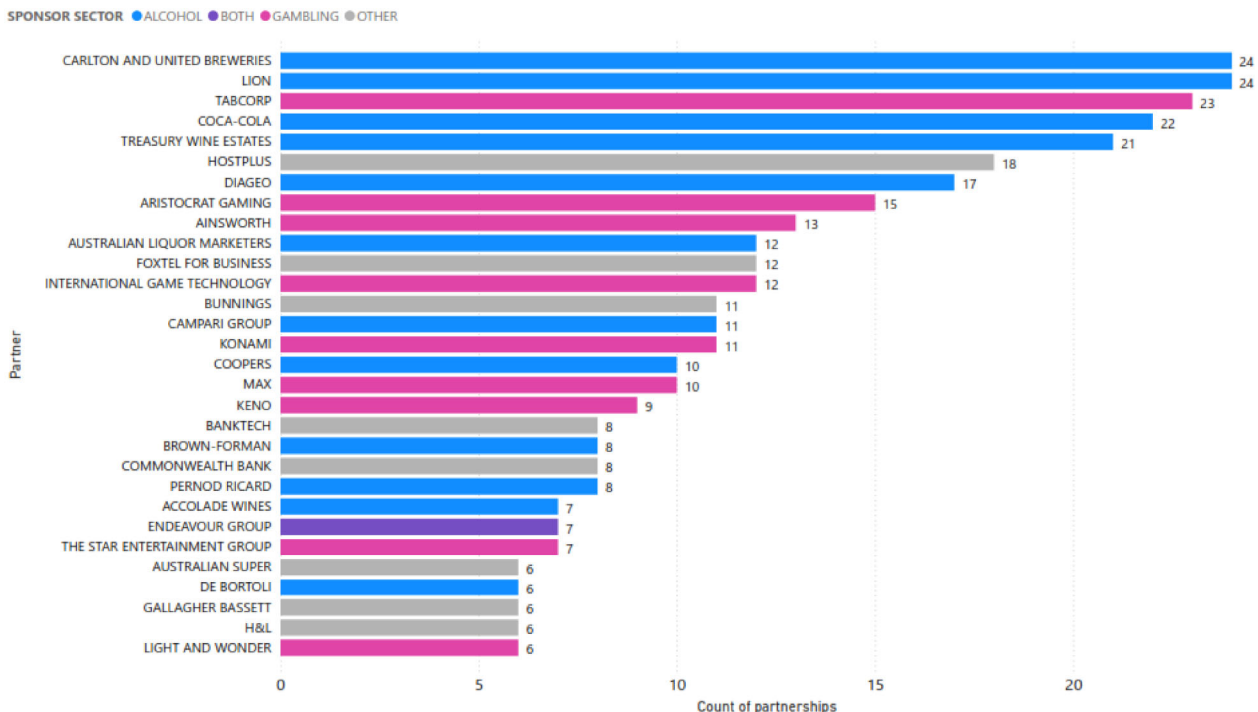


FIGURE 2 Top 30 organisations with the most partnerships.

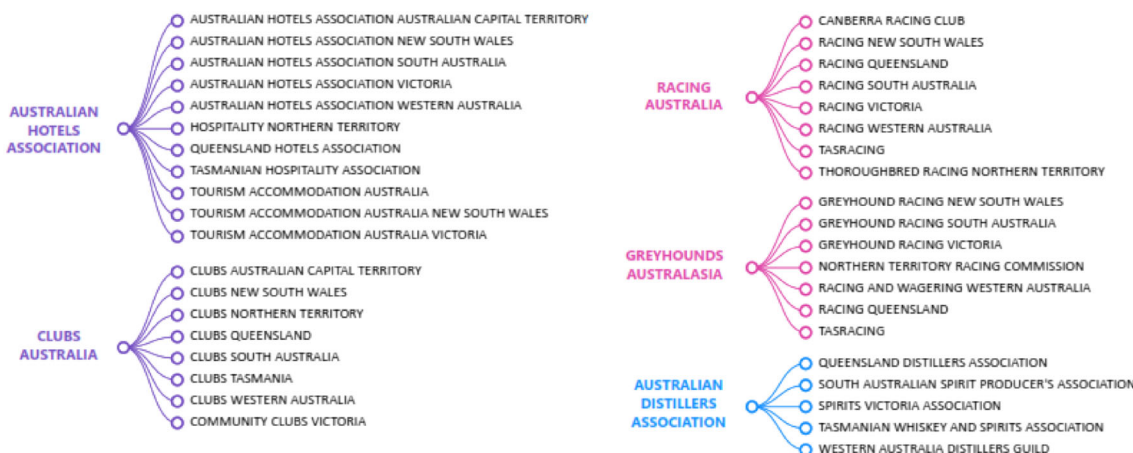


FIGURE 3 National and state division clusters.

Third, because many organisations partnered with more than one association, associations were also linked via these connections. Figure 4 presents a GEPHI network analysis of all associations and partners in our data set. The image on the left shows the whole network, whereas the image on the right is limited to the associations and partners with the highest betweenness centrality, a measure of their relative importance in and degree of connectedness to the network.

Finally, we investigated how transparent partners were about their relationships with two groups of associations: the hotels associations (including tourism accommodation divisions) and the clubs associations. Six clubs associations disclosed their partners and 11 hotels

associations disclosed theirs. Out of 699 possible relationships with 372 organisations, we were only able to assess 658 relationships, as two organisations did not have a website and 39 were no longer listed as a partner when we conducted our assessment.

Of the 658 relationships assessed, only 91 (13.8%) were transparently disclosed (Figure 5). There were an additional 43 partial disclosures, where the partner mentioned the associations (e.g. in a blog post or annual report) but did not explicitly refer to their partnership arrangement. Patterns of disclosure varied by sector and individual sponsor. Alcohol companies were the least transparent, with none of the 127 relationships fully disclosed and with only two partly disclosed. Gambling companies were slightly more transparent, with

first Australian study to comprehensively map the range of industry associations active in these two sectors and the links between them. Overall, we found poor transparency across the sectors, both from the associations and from their partners. Many industry associations failed to disclose their members or corporate partners and, likewise, corporate partners rarely disclosed their support. There was limited information about the funding models or financial resources for associations. In the absence of clear and comprehensive information about partnerships and funding, we can only speculate about whose interests are ultimately represented. Nonetheless, by documenting gaps in information, this study provides a useful starting point for monitoring industry associations as well as advocacy campaigns to improve transparency and disclosure requirements.

Mapping and analysing the number and types of actors involved in alcohol and gambling associations can help to understand the relative power and influence of an association and adds a level of granularity to existing studies of the 'system' of organised interests [33, 35]. Associations often make explicit the economic contribution of their members on their websites and policy submissions [39]. Many of the partners we identified are powerful corporations with large revenue streams, market share and employee bases. By identifying the corporate members of associations this study helps to reveal the potential political influence that industry associations wield via the economic power of their members.

The associations we identified were diverse in their focus, size, members, partners, purpose and activities. Some associations were national groups that engaged in substantial political activities, such as Clubs Australia and the AHA [2, 20, 40]. Others were regional associations (such as many of the wine associations) who focused more on local tourism and capacity building in the sector (e.g. agricultural resources). Although alcohol and gambling are often portrayed as powerful forces of opposition in the public health community, it is important to acknowledge the diversity within the sectors. Although some associations and their individual members/partners may play an active role in challenging public health policies and initiatives, others are perhaps more benign. Likewise, the interests of associations (and their members) are sometimes competing, such as the Brewers Association and the Independent Brewers Association, representing the largest and smallest beer companies in Australia, respectively. These diverse interests highlight opportunities to potentially divide and fragment the alcohol and gambling sectors, weakening the political influence of industry associations [41].

Partners were likewise diverse. In the alcohol sector, it was unsurprising to find some of the largest companies, such as Carlton and United Breweries (owned by Asahi) and Lion (owned by Kirin) amongst the main partners, and likewise for Tabcorp in the gambling sector. Alongside these market leaders we also found many small and independent alcohol companies (especially wineries), although this trend was less pronounced in gambling associations, the members and sponsors of which were mainly large companies. It was also interesting to note the companies that we might expect to find but did not. For instance, in the alcohol sector we did not find the multinational beer company Heineken (despite finding several other large

multinationals). Likewise in the gambling sector, we did not find the Federal Group or Delaware North (that own casinos), although we note that the association previously representing casinos (Casino and Resorts Australasia) has ceased to exist and we could not find a list of former members. Previous studies of industry associations have explored how sector and market characteristics lead to companies lobbying together or alone, showing that high levels of product competition coupled with low levels of market concentration leads to collective lobbying [42]. Given the high levels of market concentration in both the alcohol and gambling markets, this perhaps explains why most of the large companies are members of associations.

One explanation for these missing companies is that they are part of industry associations, but that this information is not made public (as about 40% of the associations analysed did not disclose their partners). It could also be that these companies might not support associations, but instead use different strategies to influence governments. We have previously analysed the use of professional lobbyists by alcohol and gambling companies in Australia and found that both the Federal Group and Delaware North hired lobby firms (the former in Tasmania and the latter in all eight jurisdictions with a lobbyist register) [24]. The Federal Group has also made campaign contributions to the Liberal and Labor parties, albeit a relatively small amount compared with the amount given by the hotels and clubs associations [40]. Analysis of US trade associations found that although trade associations invested in campaign contributions and lobbying, most of their spending was on advertising and promotion [6]. Although we did not interrogate the political activities of the associations in our study, this highlights the potential division of labour between companies and associations and the factors that may motivate companies to join (or not join) associations.

Finally, the numerous partners from sectors other than alcohol and gambling raises questions as to their understanding of the political activities of some of the industry associations. Whereas some relationships between industry associations and their non-alcohol/gambling partners are easily explained (e.g. Hostplus is an industry superfund that was founded by the AHA), others are less straightforward. In the case of associations with a history of political opposition to public health policies, such as the opposition of clubs and hotels associations to gambling reform [20], this raises the question of whether partners are aware of or concerned about those activities. Do these corporate partners have conflict of interest policies (or might the partnerships be viewed as risks)? Are the policy positions of the associations or their other partners known and/or taken into consideration when companies initially enter into partnership agreements? Future studies could explore these questions.

There are several limitations to our study. We were unable to collect data for associations without a public website, and our sample is likely an under-representation of the real footprint of alcohol and gambling industry associations (and their partners/members). Our study also represents a snapshot in time because of the dynamic nature of associations and their sponsors. Industry associations regularly merge or change their public identity. This was evidenced during

data collection when the public website for the Distilled Spirits Industry Council of Australia became defunct and was no longer accessible.

There are also opportunities to build on our study. In our forthcoming research programme, we will link these data with lobbying and political donation data. Such data linkages allow for a deeper understanding of the patterns of political activity within and across industry sectors. Future studies could also take a longitudinal approach and analyse the emergence and decline of associations (and shifting members or partners) in response to policy threats. The not-for-profit InfluenceMap is an excellent example of tracking industry lobbying of global climate policy [27, 43]. A similar approach could analyse industry opposition to public health policy. For example, the Alliance of Australian Retailers was a front group financed by the tobacco industry to oppose plain packaging legislation when it was introduced in Australia, and they have since ceased their activity [44]. Qualitative case studies of specific associations could help to understand their political influence and the role of their partners and sponsors in shaping the direction of the organisation.

Although this study did not investigate the political activities of industry associations or their sponsors, future studies could compare the activities of associations and members. Research in tobacco and fossil fuel space has shown that companies use industry associations to camouflage their political influence, especially when engaging in more controversial or oppositional strategies [6, 45]. The low level of sponsor disclosures for the clubs and hotels associations suggests that organisations may seek to distance themselves from these associations. Further, in the case of clubs associations, our study analysed corporate sponsors and partners rather than community club members; however, their relationship with clubs associations (and views on partners) is worthy of further investigation [46].

Finally, future studies could seek to understand whether members/partners have satisfactory knowledge of what each industry association represents and whether this aligns with their own interests and goals. This could be modelled on or incorporated into existing research about commercial conflicts of interest. One such approach that might provide a useful template is the draft World Health Organization (WHO) tool for preventing conflicts of interest in nutrition policy [47, 48]. There is also potential opportunity to educate sponsors about the political practices of these associations, so they can make informed decisions on which associations they affiliate to and whether to divest from harmful interests. This in turn could help to weaken some of the structural power afforded to the associations.

CONCLUSION

This study presents a deeper understanding of the associations representing two harmful industries in Australia: alcohol and gambling. Our analysis highlights the diversity of organisations and interests that ally with alcohol and gambling associations. It also demonstrates the low transparency of these associations – both in their disclosure of partners and in their partners' lack of reciprocal disclosure. Internationally, some countries have developed systems to require greater transparency from industry associations about the extent and nature of their political activities, such as the European Union's transparency register

or Ireland's lobbyist register. Finally, our study shows the value and possibility of developing a comprehensive database of industry associations, an important step towards efforts to systematically monitor commercial determinants of health [36, 49].

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Cara Platts: Formal analysis; investigation; methodology; writing - original draft; writing - review and editing. **Jennifer Lacy-Nichols:** Conceptualization; formal analysis; investigation; methodology; project administration; supervision; visualization; writing - original draft; writing - review and editing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the generous input from Charles Livingstone, Samantha Thomas, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education and the Alliance for Gambling Reform to help create and refine our list of industry associations. Thank you also to the creators of the political donations data sets, which helped seed our list: Inga Ting, Anna Freeland, Michael Workman and Nathanael Scott (ABC); the Greens' Democracy for Sale project; and Maggie Johnson and Charles Livingstone (Monash). This article is based on Cara Platt's capstone research project for the Master of Public Health (MPH), and we are grateful to the support of the MPH team at the University of Melbourne. Open access publishing facilitated by The University of Melbourne, as part of the Wiley - The University of Melbourne agreement via the Council of Australian University Librarians.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

CP is the recipient of a St. Vincent's Research Endowment Fund Grant. JLN is the recipient of a fellowship to research the commercial determinants of health from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

ETHICS APPROVAL

Not applicable.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data sets are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Platts C, Lacy-Nichols J. Mapping corporate sponsorship of alcohol and gambling associations: An Australian pilot study. *Addiction*. 2025;120(6):1156–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16775>