
History Of Aboriginal Alcoholism And Violence

Introduction

In Australian culture; parties, social activities or even in relaxation alcohol is always available. These drinking practice as part of social customs affects the alcohol consumptions rate in rural areas. Influences through advertisement, marketing and promotion, cost, accessibility and age restrictions. The complex structure of social determinants contributors such as malnutrition, lack of exercise, smoking, drinking and drug abuse may or may not attributed factor to why humans drink at these harmful levels, (Alcohol in Australia)

Invasion and Colonisation

1770 when Cook claimed the East Coast of Australia for Great Britain and again with accounts favoring colonisation at Botany Bay (now in Sydney), New South Wales. Arthur Phillip in 1788, first fleet of British ships arrived at Botany Bay, to established a prison colony, the primary colony on the Australian mainland. Marked the start of 'white settlement'. (History of Australia (1788-1850) 2005, July 18)

Upon the arrival of the first fleet or also referred to as the white settlers and invaded Australia. First pubs were opened within weeks and in fact white people introduced alcohol to the Aboriginal people to drink. But they didn't teach about the risks to go along side alcohol consumptions. Significantly after, Aboriginal alcohol used changed. Many aboriginal Labourers were paid in alcohol or tobacco. Early 1800s in Sydney, a favorite spectator sport of white people was to ply aboriginal men with alcohol and encourage them to fight each other to death. White settlers also gave alcohol to Aboriginal people to buy for sex. (Jens Korff, Creative Spirits. (2019, November 18). Aboriginal alcohol consumption)

Since colonization heavy drinking was a cultural norm transported to Australia by the British. Aboriginals' issues with liquor started with invasion. In time rum became a currency of the colony. In 1830s Spirits were known alcoholic beverages widely consumed in Australia, 13.6 liters of pure alcohol per head annually consumption of alcohol an in 1890s it declined to 5.8 liters during the economic downturn. After World War II alcohol consumption per capita rose of 13.1 liters in 1974-75 and 10 liters in 2008-09. (A Brief History of Alcohol Consumption in Australia. 2020, March 2)

Stolen Generations

Between 1910 to 1970 under the policy of Assimilation, Australian Federal and State Government agencies and church missions, separate children of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander from their families by force. The generations of children became known as the "stolen generations" or "stolen children"

Assimilation was based on a belief of superiority and inferiority between white and black people. It was presumed that "full-blood" Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would soon

disappear anyway. It proposed that children with Aboriginal and white parentage, who were termed “half caste” (derogatory term), should be assimilated into white society and adopt white culture. Lighter skin color children believed would be more easily assimilated. Mostly of these children were placed in institutions or foster homes where neglect and abuse were common.

Many of the stolen children were physically, emotionally and sexually abused. Many factors that the Aboriginal people suffer from, social and private problems including mental disorder, violence, alcoholism and welfare dependence. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were denied of their identity, culture, language, traditions and land. Those who have been affected by the policy of assimilation have a high incidence of post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and suicide. (The Stolen Generations 2020, January 12)

Australian drinking culture

1837 laws were made to prevent Aboriginal access to alcohol as binge drinking became problematic. Since alcohol was bought illegally, pattern of rapid consumptions of high liquor content beverages contributed to binge drinking cycle. The right to drink alcohol were given to indigenous Australians between 1957 and 1975 a right for many aborigines represent equality, citizenship and status. (Alcohol in Australia)

From the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) presenting the current alcohol consumption statistics. From the 2002 and 2008 NATSISS two specific indicators of alcohol consumption risk was derived: chronic alcohol consumption and binge drinking. The first was designed to capture long-term or chronic risks and was focused on the self-reported alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months. The second measure was designed to capture the possibility of binge drinking in the short term and based on the highest self-reported amount of alcohol consumed during the fortnight before the interview.

In 2008, 17% of 15 years and older of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reported drinking at chronic risky/high risk levels, 46% were low risk drinkers and 35% had abstained from drinking alcohol; had not consumed alcohol or had never consumed alcohol in the last 12 months. Overall 20% of men were more likely to drink at chronic risky/high risk levels than of women with 14%. 22% among the highest chronic risky/high risk drinking were aged 35-44 years and 10% those aged 55 years and above. 46% rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas were more likely of risky/high risk drinking compare to 31% of non-remote areas be abstainers. In 2008 NATSISS shows association between alcohol consumption and criminal justice system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in particular, who are chronic risky/high risk drinkers (29%) compare than low risk drinkers (15%) to have been prosecuted in the last five years, 55% compared with 36% to whom have been formally charged by police and 18% compared with 7% to have been incarcerated at some point in their lifetime. They were also more likely to have been a victim of violence in the last 12 months (35% compared with 25%) (4704.0 - The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Oct 2010)

Closing the Gap

Kevin Rudd, the prime minister of Australia formally apologies to the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People on 13 February 2008. Closing the Gap, a technique

adopted by Australian government from the campaign in 2008 known as Close the Gap. This formal agreement focuses on the improvement of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, to deliver better health, education and employment and eliminate the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. (Summary /Closing the Gap, 2018)

A target was set by Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008, to achieve life expectancy and health equality by 2030 through the Closing the Gap. The fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are likely to experience poorer health outcomes than non-Indigenous. 10 years has passed, Closing the Gap has failed to meet its target. The lack of progress on these targets is complex, in fact, the mortality and life expectancy gaps have widened. In planning and implementation stages of the strategy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not included. In the future the need to work in closer partnership with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these targets to achieve Closing the Gap. (Partnerships Key to Closing the Gap)

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