



CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

PAPERS TO BE PRESENTED AT A THEMATIC MEETING OF THE KETTIL BRUUN SOCIETY:

PUBLIC HEALTH AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF ALCOHOL

30 SEPTEMBER – 3 OCTOBER 2019, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Researchers are invited to submit an abstract of a proposed paper by Monday, **1 April 2019** to the conference website: <https://law.unimelb.edu.au/alcohol-globalgov-2019>. The abstract submission must include

- the title of the paper; and the name, email and affiliation of the author or coauthor who will attend and present and discuss the paper, and of any coauthors;
- up to 250 words summarising the issues tackled in the paper and its approach to them, the data used and main lines of analysis or argument, and potential conclusions;
- a conflict of interest statement including, in the past five years, all funding, employment by, or consultancies with the alcohol industry or organisations funded by it. Abstracts may be rejected on the basis of an author's conflict of interest.

Notification of acceptance of abstracts will be sent by email by 1 May 2019. For an abstract which is accepted for the meeting, the author(s) will be asked to submit a draft paper to a protected website by September 15, making it available to others attending the meeting.

Themes of the meeting

Papers would be welcomed on the following and related topics:

- The option of coverage of alcohol by an international public health-oriented instrument, whether a Framework Convention on Alcohol Control in the form of a treaty, a new Single Convention on psychoactive substances, or something else (e.g., a World Health Organization (WHO) Code): what are

the pluses and minuses of any particular option? What are the major elements to be included? What results are sought? What steps are required to move work forward on such instruments?

- Studies of the attention to and governance of alcohol in a range of international agencies and the potential fora other than the WHO relevant to the public health goal of reducing the harms associated with alcohol consumption (e.g., the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Anti-Doping Agency, the EMCDDA, Interpol, etc.);
- Alcohol in trade and investment agreements and disputes at the global and regional levels, including effects of World Trade Organization and other trade agreements on alcohol consumption and harm; restrictions in international economic law on alcohol control measures; limits on taxation and evasion of domestic advertising restrictions in the EU; means of attaining effective public health treatment of alcohol in trade and investment agreements;
- Trends in the global alcohol industry as they affect global governance of alcohol, including studies of multinational producers and marketers as actors at the international level; interactions between the industry and public health interests in international fora; the industry's Corporate Social Responsibility efforts and their effects on alcohol policies at the international level; and
- Lessons for alcohol from experience with international governance of tobacco, other drugs, and other hazardous commodities.

The main focus of the meeting is global *or* regional arrangements and developments; papers that are *solely* concerned with domestic arrangements in individual countries will not be accepted.

Presentations will be welcomed from a wide range of research traditions relevant to its themes, including:

- Social, political science and policy research not only on alcohol but also on lessons from other attractive but problematic commodities;
- International law scholarship, particularly global health law, international trade and investment law, international labour law, international food law, and international sports law; and
- Historical and legal expertise in the adoption and workings of the *WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control*, the drug conventions, and other international agreements in such areas as pharmaceuticals, armaments, and crime.

A number of leading scholars in the field will be attending and presenting papers at the meeting, including:

- **Douglas Bettcher**, until recently the Director of Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases at the World Health Organization.
- **Sally Casswell**, Director of SHORE, Massey University, New Zealand, and President of the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance, as well as of the Kettil Bruun Society;
- **David Jernigan**, Department of Health Law, Policy & Management, Boston University, a leading researcher on advertising regulations and on the structure of the alcohol industry;
- **Paula O'Brien**, Melbourne School of Law, who has analysed industry-backed complaints concerning alcohol labelling requirements and their resolution in the Technical Barriers to Trade arm of the World Trade Organization;
- **Jane Kelsey**, Faculty of Law, University of Auckland, an expert on provisions concerning the handling of public health issues in trade agreements;
- **Jonathan Liberman**, director of the McCabe Centre on Law and Cancer, with expertise in the history of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control;
- **Gian Luca Burci**, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID), Geneva, and former legal counsel of the World Health Organization.

Meeting structure and participation

Papers will be selected for presentation at the conference on the basis of the submitted abstract, and authors will be asked to submit their draft paper for circulation to participants prior to the conference. The meeting will be held at the downtown campus of La Trobe University, on Collins St. near Queen St. in central Melbourne.

The meeting will follow the format of Kettil Bruun Society thematic meetings, with most of those attending contributing papers for discussion at the meeting. The meeting will thus focus on the presentation and discussion of pre-circulated papers that are, as yet, unpublished. Each accepted paper will be introduced by its author in 10 minutes, and will receive a prepared commentary, followed by general discussion. This format provides an opportunity for authors to get early input and peer review ahead of submitting a paper for publication. It is expected that selected papers, after revision, will be published in thematic sections or issues of journals.

There will be a registration fee of AUD \$100 (about USD \$70) for the meeting, and participants will be expected to finance their own travel and accommodation. Some limited travel support may be available for scholars from low- and middle-income countries. Application for such support must be received (along with an abstract) by 1 April 2019.

Background to the meeting

Urgent action is needed by governments to control the marketing, labelling and availability of alcohol given the growing evidence about the burden of disease and premature mortality associated with alcohol consumption. But alcohol needs to be seen not just as a domestic issue, but as *a global health problem*. The sources of the harm (especially in the form of global alcohol industry conduct) cross borders, nearly all countries experience a range of harms from alcohol consumption, and the potential solutions to these problems increasingly require international innovation and solidarity through global governance. In this context, 'global governance' refers to the laws, rules, norms, institutions, processes and practices of state and non-state actors across national borders relating to alcohol.

Alcohol is the great exception among problematic psychoactive substances in not being covered by any public health-oriented international drug control conventions. The only international body with a continuing concern with alcohol issues, the WHO, has expressed good intentions in the *Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol* and in recognising alcohol as a major risk factor for noncommunicable diseases in the *Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013-2020*. The WHO is singularly well-placed to improve the global governance of alcohol, with its scientific and technical expertise and its range of instrument-making powers. But it also lacks resources for effective action, with fewer than a handful of staff committed to the area.

At the same time, alcohol is a substance of concern to other international organisations, including the United Nations General Assembly (which included alcohol in the *Sustainable Development Goals*, targets 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 under Goal 3) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (which is presently considering an alcohol labelling standard for the first time). But institutional attention is sporadic and the links with public health efforts to reduce the harms associated with alcohol consumption have not been well drawn to date. The potential for other international organizations, with their diverse agendas, governing instruments, institutional processes and membership dynamics, to further the public health governance of alcohol has not been explored.

This work is urgent given the growing encroachment of international and regional trade agreements and disputes on national and subnational alcohol control powers. Scholarship has been limited about the major global factors that limit the ability of national and local governments to control markets for alcohol. Factors include the growing concentration and globalisation of alcohol producers and distributors, particularly in beer and spirits, but also increasingly in wine; the increasing success of industry efforts to develop and use trade agreements and dispute settlement mechanisms to limit governmental control efforts; and the absence of any international public health-oriented alcohol control agreement or other instrument which could support interventions at the domestic level and assist the defence of alcohol control measures in trade and investment disputes, as the *WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* has done to some extent in disputes about tobacco.

Organising committee and contact information

The meeting is organised by the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research and the Centre for Health Law and Society at La Trobe University and the Melbourne Law School at The University of Melbourne. The organising committee for the meeting is:

- Professor Robin Room, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University
- Dr Deborah Gleeson, Department of Public Health and Centre for Health Law and Society, La Trobe University
- Dr Trish Hepworth, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education
- Paula O'Brien, Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne
- Clare Slattery, McCabe Centre for Law and Cancer

Please direct queries about the meeting to kbs-2019@unimelb.edu.au.

Sponsors

The meeting is generously sponsored by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, VicHealth, and the Centre for Health Law and Society at La Trobe University.

