An iPad app to help Indigenous Australians describe their drinking
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Acknowledging the Gadigal people

Photo: Kylie Lee

Photo: Jimmy Perry
• Communities don’t have local data on drinking (or drug use)
  – To fight for better services and programs
  – To see how work to tackle drinking is going

• The best data on Aboriginal drinking patterns is 20 years old -- and urban only
  (Commonwealth Health, NDSHS, 1996; Chriktritzhs and Brady 2006)
• Develop an iPad app that makes it easy for people to report what they drink
  – NHMRC, 5-year funding

• Even if they:
  – Speak English as a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> language
  – Don’t like reading
  – Are ashamed about their drinking
  – Are worried about child protection services
We know that..

• Drinkers often
  – share alcohol
  – use atypical containers (e.g. empty juice bottles)
• Drinking may vary with:
  – Travel
  – who the drinker is with
  – what is going on (e.g. celebration or funeral)
• Some remote communities don’t have ‘mainstream’ counting systems
• Drinkers rarely count drinks
In partnership (e.g. ADAC, communities, services)

• Develop an app
  – Workshop: community and service reps; experts
  – Consider recognised assessment approaches

• Test the app
  – Does it work as well as a person asking?
  – Does it give the same sort of answers if used again?

• Improve the app

• Test in other communities in a survey

• Refine the app

A quick look at the ‘Grog Survey App’
Have you had any grog at all in the last 12 months? (since NAIDOC week last year) 

Yes  No 

Time: 41 min

How long ago was the last day when you had grog? 

You may be asked about 4 different drinking occasions.

Next

Time: 2 min
Can I ask you about the last day you had any grog. Where were you drinking?
(Can choose more than one)

What types of grog were you drinking that day?
(Choose all types of grog you drank that time)

Beer  Wine  Port or Sherry  Spirits  Other
Get juice bottle example for wine

How full of red wine was your soft drink / water bottle when you had a drink that day?

'standard drinks' maths is done by the app

The last day I drank grog (4 days ago) I had...

Full strength beer

- Can (375mL)

Wine

- Red wine - Juice bottle (500mL)
If someone feels more comfortable to talk about how much the group drank?

How many people were you drinking grog with?
(Drag how many people you were drinking with into your drinking circle)

4 people

Next
Sometimes when people drink together they all have the same amount. Other times some drink more than others. That day, what was your share?

30-pack slab (carton) (30x375mL)

'Standard drinks' maths is done by the app

Some people's hands shake when they stop drinking or before their first drink of the day. How often does this happen to you?

- Never
- Once in a blue moon (Less than once a month)
- Sometimes (1-3 times a month, but not every week)
- Weekly (1-3 times a week)
- Most days or every day (4 or more times a week)

Time: 14 min
Sample case

- Woman, SA
- Last drinking day: 26 standard drinks
- Average consumption: less than 1 drink / day
  - four drinking days in five months

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Standard drinks per day (average)

Mean 3.7
SD 8.8
N=150
In summary...

- Assessment of drinking must consider cultural context
- Electronic aids may reduce barriers like shame and assist memory and recording
- Potential value in surveys, clinics and health promotion
- Broader potential, e.g. non-English speaking or marginalised groups worldwide