



# Problems increase as bottle shops close in

NEW research at the University of Western Australia has found people living in neighbourhoods with more liquor outlets have higher levels of harmful drinking and worse mental health than people living further away from such outlets.

The research is regarded as significant because mental health was often overlooked when studying the density of alcohol outlets, with a heavier focus on violence, crime, safety and traffic accidents.

Co-author and deputy director of UWA's Centre for the Built Environment and Health, Associate Professor Lisa Wood, said Cockburn had been part of the study, with

## STUDY CRITICISES PROLIFERATION

the most recent database of licensed alcohol outlets in WA indicating about 56 licensed organisations selling alcohol within Cockburn.

"Yes, Cockburn was one of the suburbs included in the study, but we did not analyse the relationship between alcohol outlet density and health outcomes at the individual suburb level," she said.

"We found that the average number of standard drinks per day and the rate of harmful alcohol consumption increased for each additional alcohol outlet in a neighbourhood."

Researchers also found that

the likelihood of being treated in hospital for anxiety, stress or depression increased as the number of alcohol outlets within walking distance (1600m) of home increased.

"Our findings underscore the importance of limiting both the number of liquor store licences and the geographic density of outlets as a way to improve mental health and reduce other alcohol-related harm," Prof Wood said.

Health Minister Kim Hames said this important research would feed in to future options for addressing excessive alcohol consumption.