



Close by bottleos a health hazard

People with more liquor outlets in their neighbourhood have higher levels of harmful drinking and worse mental health than those who live farther away from such outlets, according to new research from The University of Western Australia.

The study was published last week in the prestigious online US journal PLOS One. It is significant because most research on alcohol outlet density has previously focused on violence, crime, safety and traffic accidents.

Co-author Associate Professor Lisa Wood, deputy director of UWA's Centre for the Built

Environment and Health, said the study reinforced the WA Health Department's five-year plan for a healthier WA.

"One of the suggestions in the five-year plan is limiting the density of alcohol outlets," 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."

The researchers also found that the likelihood of being treated in hospital for anxiety, stress or depression increased as the number of alcohol outlets within walk-

ing distance (1600m) of home increased.

"While the association between alcohol outlet density and injury, crime and violence are well documented, this is one of the first studies internationally to specifically look at how this might impact on mental health disorders," Associate Professor Wood said.

The study was based on Department of Health survey data from nearly 7000 Perth-based adults, and used geographical mapping to link this to the location of all licensed alcohol outlets in Perth.