



Bottle shop blues for locals

■ **Rhianna King**

People who live near liquor stores are more likely to suffer from anxiety, stress and depression, a survey of West Australians has revealed.

The University of WA-led study of more than 6000 adults found those with more stores in their neighbourhood engaged in higher levels of harmful drinking and had worse mental health than those who lived further away from liquor outlets.

The research, published in online US journal PLOS One last week, has prompted calls for limits on store numbers to be considered.

Co-author Lisa Wood, from UWA's Centre for the Built Environment and Health, said the study — based on data from 6387 Perth adults between 2006 and 2009 — was significant because most research on alcohol store density focused on violence, crime, safety and traffic accidents.

“This is one of the first studies internationally to specifically look at how this might impact on mental health disorders,” she said.

The researchers found the likelihood of being treated in hospital for anxiety, stress or depression increased as the number of alcohol outlets within 1600m of homes increased.

According to the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor's 2011-12 annual report, there were 536 licensed liquor stores in WA at June 30 last year.