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CHAPTER FIVE

CHANGING WORKPLACE CULTURES:
AN INTEGRATED MODEL FOR THE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT OF ALCOHOL-RELATED PROBLEMS

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter argues that a cultural model can comprehensively explain the relationship between workplaces and the alcohol consumption patterns of employees. The cultural model we propose considers the effects of workplace stressors and controls; recognises that individual perceptions and beliefs about alcohol use can mediate these effects; and explains the social-psychological processes involved in the development and maintenance of workplace cultures and drinking norms. While a cultural model acknowledges the role of individual perceptions and beliefs, it also emphasises the role of environmental factors. It also proposes that the most important determinant of drinking patterns is the alcohol-related culture of the work organisation. Furthermore, the cultural approach has implications for policy and practice: the same processes that lead to the development of alcohol-related norms can be used to develop ways to reduce or prevent alcohol-related risk by creating norms that promote low-risk drinking, especially within the workplace. Workplace culture shapes not only the drinking behaviours of individuals and social groups within the workplace, but also the drinking behaviours of individuals and social groups external to the workplace, such as workers' families and the local community. Thus, there is substantial potential for interventions in the workplace that target the wider social and cultural environment.

KEY TERMS

- alienation
- drinking behaviour
- drinking cultures
- integrated models
- mediating variables
- policy
- practice
- research
- workplace controls
- workplace culture
- workplace stressors

INTRODUCTION

Australia has largely overlooked the potential of the workplace as a setting in which to implement cost-effective strategies to prevent and address risky drinking patterns. Scope exists to redress this oversight. There are multiple reasons why the workplace has potential as a setting for prevention and intervention. In the workplace it is possible to identify and help individuals whose patterns of alcohol consumption are potentially harmful, both at work and elsewhere. Efficacious workplace interventions could make a substantial contribution to workplace safety, workplace productivity and worker well-being. In addition, social contagion theory (e.g. Skog 1985) suggests that improvements to an individual worker's risky drinking patterns would positively impact the wider community.

In this chapter, the relationship between the workplace and patterns of alcohol consumption is examined from three perspectives: stress/alienation, workplace controls and workplace culture. While the latter has received comparatively little attention from researchers, we propose an integrated model of workplace culture that provides an explanation of the relationship between the workplace and workers' alcohol consumption patterns. This model also has implications for prevention and intervention strategies. This integrated model incorporates and extends previous approaches by allowing for the examination of factors that promote 'low risk' versus 'risky' drinking norms, and by arguing that one of the most important determinants of workers' drinking patterns is the alcohol-related culture of the work organisation. Thus, the model represents a paradigm shift in thinking about drinking and the workplace, which is consistent with renewed Australian attention to the role of culture in understanding and addressing risky drinking in the Australian context (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy 1998; Roche et al. 2005).

TRADITIONAL EXPLANATIONS OF WORK-RELATED ALCOHOL USE

Work stress, alienation and alcohol use

Most research on the relationship between the workplace and drinking patterns has adopted stress or alienation frameworks. The former proposes that workplace stressors can result in increased patterns of risky drinking. Workplace experiences (such as physically or psychologically demanding work) and events (such as accidents or repetitive injury and disputes) give rise to stress that can be alleviated by drinking (Trice & Sonnenstuhl 1990). Workplace stressors can include skill underutilisation, pay inequity, boredom, hazardous work, shiftwork, role conflict and job insecurity (Davidson & Cooper 1981). Work stressors may also exist in the organisational structure; for example in poor relationships between management and workers, or in low pay or poor job satisfaction. Grunberg and colleagues (Grunberg et al. 1999; Grunberg, Moore & Greenberg 1998) found that work stressors indirectly influence alcohol consumption. Work stress influenced job satisfaction, which in turn influenced beliefs about drinking as an effective method of coping with stress.

The alienation framework proposes that the workplace can lead to alienation. The work might be boring and monotonous, or workers may have little control over the pace or planning of the work. These conditions can create a sense of dissatisfaction or powerlessness that is relieved by drinking alcohol (Trice & Sonnenstuhl 1990). Greenberg and Grunberg (1995)

examined the relationship between alienation, heavy drinking and the negative consequences of drinking. After controlling for background factors, the direct effects of alienation on heavy drinking or the negative consequences of drinking were minimal. However, they found an indirect relationship: alienation influenced job satisfaction, which in turn influenced a set of beliefs about the utility of drinking as a means of coping (Greenberg & Grunberg 1995).

Overall, research support for stress or alienation explanations for workplace drinking is mixed. While some studies demonstrate modest associations between stress/alienation and drinking (e.g. Martin, Blum & Roman 1992; Seeman & Seeman 1992), others have found no such association (e.g. Cooper, Russell & Frone 1990; Harris & Fennell 1988). These findings suggest that other factors may be involved. In particular, the stress/alienation perspective cannot explain why exposure to stress or alienation does not *always* impact on drinking. It appears that some workers are either unaffected by stress or alienation, have different perceptions of stress or alienation, or have adopted alternative coping strategies.

Workplace controls and alcohol use

An alternative explanation of the relationship between the workplace and drinking patterns focuses on the role of workplace controls. This explanation proposes that structural features of the work environment restrict or encourage the availability of alcohol and, therefore, drinking. Environmental features that encourage the availability of alcohol include low visibility of workers (e.g. working alone or outside the workplace), lack of supervision and lack of formal alcohol-use policies (Trice & Roman 1978). There are two types of availability (Ames & Grube 1999): physical and social availability. 'Physical availability' refers to the access to alcohol in a given environment and the associated costs or barriers to obtaining it. Physical availability can be objective (e.g. legal, organisational and geographical factors affecting the cost of obtaining alcohol) or subjective (e.g. perceptions of availability, including beliefs about how easy or difficult it is to obtain alcohol). 'Social availability' refers to the degree of normative support for drinking, which can vary according to the situation. For example while drinking at a work-related social function might receive significant normative support, there may be less normative support for drinking during working hours. 'Objective social availability' refers to actual drinking and approval of drinking by family, friends and others in a given situation. 'Subjective social availability' refers to individual perceptions of alcohol-related norms in a given environment.

The relatively small amount of research concerning the workplace controls explanation tends to be supportive. For example low supervision and low visibility have been found to be important factors in the development of norms for heavy drinking among workers (Ames & Janes 1987). Alcohol availability and social drinking among co-workers have been found to distinguish between problem and non-problem drinkers in a range of industries (Macdonald, Wells & Wild 1999). In addition, the perceived drinking of co-workers was found to be the strongest predictor of work-related drinking among manufacturing industry employees (Ames & Grube 1999), with similar results evident in a study of on-the-job drinking among young workers (Frone 2003).

The workplace controls perspective is important because it identifies structural features that can restrict or encourage alcohol availability and therefore consumption. However, the controls perspective cannot explain the mechanisms by which availability translates into consumption. Individual perceptions, attitudes and beliefs also play a role. Workers may, for example, have easy access to alcohol in the workplace but conduct a cost–benefit analysis before deciding to drink. Factors that increase the cost of dismissal have been found to lower the probability of employee misconduct (Garcia 1996). In particular, employees were less likely to drink at work if they were paid a wage premium or if they worked in an area with high unemployment (Garcia 1996). Similarly, Grube, Ames and Delaney (1994) found that work-related drinking was influenced by expectancies of how likely it was that drinking would lead to personal consequences. Alternatively, employees who are heavy drinkers may self-select occupations with low levels of supervision and high levels of availability. However, this proposition assumes individuals have the opportunity to select from a range of occupations and that individuals have prior knowledge of the alcohol availability and supervision levels of particular workplaces. Quite often, this is not the case. Hence, the controls perspective, like the stress/alienation perspectives, fails to offer a comprehensive explanatory framework.

Workplace culture and alcohol use

The workplace culture perspective provides scope to offer an integrated model. 'Culture' is conceptualised here as the shared and learned norms, values and practices that distinguish social groups. In general, culture plays an important role in defining and influencing alcohol consumption patterns and problems: about how, when and where it is appropriate to drink (Heath 1987). Cultural norms exist within work organisations. All workplaces have formal and/or informal rules and norms regarding appropriate work behaviour. Workplaces also have procedures that are designed to regulate work behaviour. These rules, norms and procedures extend to alcohol, and define what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable drinking in the workplace. Workplace rules and norms may be consistent with the rules and norms of the wider community, or they may be widely divergent. For example most workplaces would define lunchtime drinking as potentially problematic, even though alcohol consumption with meals may be viewed as socially acceptable in other contexts. Similarly, drinking norms at work may differ from an individual worker's norms for drinking away from the workplace. For example workers may be pressured to join co-workers in regular 'end of work' drinking rituals that may contrast with their normal social drinking patterns. In some work settings, workers who do not normally drink in their leisure time may find it expected of them at work.

Work-related social networks are a particularly important component of workplace cultures, especially in regard to drinking. The amount of time workers spend together at work often results in significant social relationships developing, with some of these extending off the job. Shared leisure activities can lead to the development of work-based drinking networks with particular drinking norms. Socialising after work often involves alcohol, and the level and pattern of consumption is generally influenced by the expectations of group members (Martin & Bennett 1996).

Work-based drinking networks may have a concomitant impact on the development of workplace drinking subcultures, which occur when workers share a common identity as a distinctive category of workers and form distinctive beliefs about drinking (Sonnenstuhl 1996). A range of factors can influence the development of workplace drinking subcultures including group solidarity, job identity and age group (Cosper 1979), stressful work conditions (Sonnenstuhl 1996) and occupations where teamwork is important (Fillmore & Vogel-Sprott 1997). Within these subcultures, particular drinking patterns acquire the status of normative behaviour and interact with the overall organisational culture of the workplace (Janes & Ames 1989; Trice & Sonnenstuhl 1988).

WORKPLACE CULTURE AS AN EXPLANATORY MODEL

Culture has long been seen as central in shaping drinking beliefs and practices (e.g. MacAndrew & Edgerton 1969). Using a cultural model to understand the relationship between the workplace and drinking was first explored in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but failed to garner significant interest or momentum. However, recent Australian research (Berry et al. 2007; Pidd et al. 2006) offers empirical support for revitalising such a model. This research used national survey data to categorise the alcohol consumption patterns of the Australian workforce by occupational and industry groups. Even after controlling for variables such as age, gender, income and education, consumption patterns varied significantly between industry and occupational groups. For example a significantly larger proportion of workers in the hospitality industry drank at levels associated with risk of harm in the short term compared to other industries. Hospitality workers were more than three times as likely to drink at these levels compared to workers in the lowest-risk industry group. Within the hospitality industry, alcohol is generally widely available and the sale and use of alcohol is often the core business in this industry. The research concluded that workplace culture plays an important role in determining the consumption patterns of the workforce (Pidd et al. 2006).

Earlier Australian research also supports the importance of workplace culture in understanding employee alcohol consumption. Bush, Smith and Dawes (1992) examined the combined effects of stress, controls and culture on the drinking patterns of 737 urban train drivers in Sydney. They found that 53% of workers drank at work-related celebrations, 26% after workplace accidents and 16% after workplace fatalities. Workplace drinking norms, but not perceptions of workplace rules and regulations concerning alcohol use (i.e. controls), were significantly related to alcohol use. Work stress associated with workplace accidents and fatalities was indirectly related to alcohol use via workplace norms for drinking to cope with stress. Those workers committed to a work-based culture that valued drinking had higher drinking levels than workers who did not support these workplace norms.

Previous cultural explanations of the relationship between the workplace and drinking have proposed that work-related risk factors for problematic alcohol use can be best understood as dimensions of workplace culture (Ames & Delaney 1992; Janes & Ames 1993). The workplace is a cultural environment distinct from the wider community, and as such can either support or inhibit alcohol use. Four cultural dimensions that can play an

important role in both the development and maintenance of work-related alcohol problems have been identified (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Cultural dimensions of work-related alcohol problems

Dimension	Descriptor
1 Normative regulation of drinking	Elements of the workplace that form and maintain beliefs, values and behaviours concerning drinking. Normative regulation results from formal and informal controls concerning the workplace and alcohol use.
2 Quality and organisation of work	Factors that can contribute to either stress and/or alienation.
3 Drinking subcultures	Naturally occurring groups sharing the same sets of beliefs concerning alcohol use and the workplace, including values and expectations regarding use.
4 Factors external to the workplace	The interaction between work and social life (work and social culture regarding alcohol use).

Source: Adapted from Ames and Delaney (1992); Janes and Ames (1993).

All four of the cultural dimensions proposed by Janes and Ames (1993) were supported in a study of 882 Canadian workers from a variety of occupations (Macdonald, Wells & Wild 1999). However, after controlling for multiple comparisons, only alcohol availability and social drinking among co-workers emerged as important dimensions. To some extent, the dimensions outlined by Ames and Janes (1992; Janes & Ames 1993) are limited. For example there appears to be little difference between the dimensions of drinking subcultures (dimension 3) and normative regulation of drinking (dimension 1). Both dimensions focus on alcohol-related beliefs, behaviours, values and expectations. Similarly, the definition of work quality and organisation (dimension 2) is restricted to factors involving work stress or alienation. However, there is likely to be a number of factors concerning the quality and organisation of work that, while not related to stress or alienation, may be indirectly associated with alcohol use (such as the industrial relations climate) or discipline-related policies, practices and procedures.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN TRADITIONAL EXPLANATIONS OF WORKPLACE DRINKING

Despite limited research support for the Ames and Janes model (1992; Janes & Ames 1993), a cultural approach does have the potential to resolve the inconsistencies and limitations in the stress/alienation and workplace controls perspectives. Stress at work is held to be related to drinking because workers who feel stressed learn from other workers that drinking is an appropriate and socially sanctioned method for alleviating stress (Trice & Sonnenstuhl 1990). The cultural perspective proposes that workers create shared norms, values and practices for coping with workplace stress. This perspective is supported by the results of a large study of construction, manufacturing and service industry employees that found workplace culture (defined as permissive drinking norms) both mediated

and moderated the effects of work stress and workplace controls on problem drinking (Bacharach, Bamberger & Sonnenstuhl 2002).

The relationship between workplace culture, work stress and alcohol use was also evident in a study that examined the degree to which stress and workplace culture were associated with the drinking of Australian police officers (Davey, Obst & Sheehan 2000). Davey, Obst and Sheehan (2000) found that while police officers rated social factors (such as celebrating workplace events and socialising with peers after work) as the most important reasons for drinking with work colleagues, factors related to work stress were most predictive of drinking patterns. Thus, a workplace norm of socialising with colleagues after work enabled workers to alleviate the effects of work stress with alcohol.

Workplace culture also offers an explanation of how alcohol availability in the workplace is related to consumption. For example research informed by the workplace controls perspective (e.g. Ames & Grube 1999; Frone 2003; S Macdonald, Wells & Wild 1999) has demonstrated that workplace drinking networks and perceived drinking of co-workers play a critical role in determining levels of alcohol availability and employee drinking. It is also evident that the workplace administrative culture plays a role in control explanations. Management and supervision directly affect the workplace drinking culture through the implementation of workplace controls that regulate workers' drinking patterns both at and away from the workplace. In many safety-sensitive occupations (e.g. airline pilots, bus drivers and heavy-equipment operators), management has implemented zero-tolerance policies that prohibit drinking both during work hours and immediately prior to commencing work. In contrast, management may encourage drinking by workers to celebrate work events. In these cases, tensions may exist for management between the requirement for stringent control of workers who may be affected by alcohol during work hours, and pressure to tolerate or condone workplace norms for drinking at work-related social or celebratory events that are important for building morale. Reduction of such tensions may contribute indirectly to the overall drinking culture of the workplace via its influence on the industrial relations climate or supervisor–subordinate relationships.
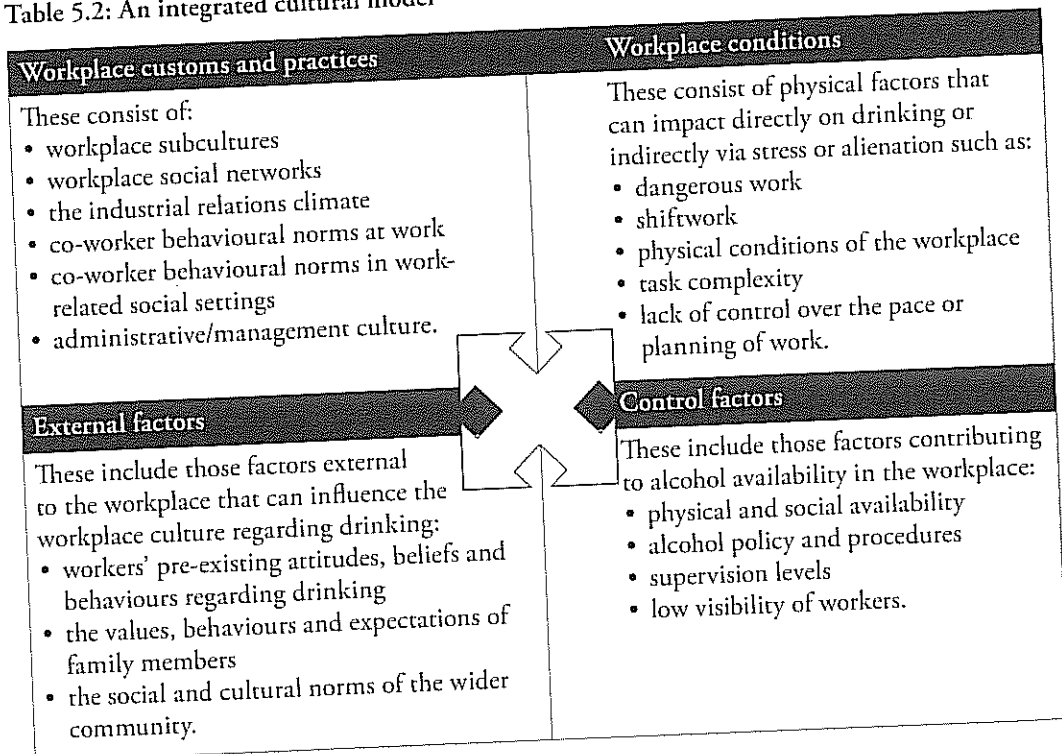
Management and supervision can also indirectly influence the overall workplace drinking culture (Trice 1992; Trice & Sonnenstuhl 1990). Such an indirect relationship was evident in a study that found workplace controls could be either strengthened or weakened by the overall workplace culture (Ames, Grube & Moore 2000). Ames, Grube and Moore (2000) examined the drinking patterns of more than 1700 employees working in an American organisation with the same union, but in two different work environments. One work environment used traditional American management methods, while the other used a management model transplanted from Japan. While overall drinking rates were similar in the two work locations, significant differences were observed regarding work-related drinking. In the traditional management site, more permissive drinking norms were observed and 25% of workers engaged in workplace drinking. In the Japanese management site, less permissive norms were observed and only 3% engaged in workplace drinking. At both sites, alcohol policies and policy enforcement were related to alcohol availability at work and drinking norms.

An ethnographic analysis of the organisation found that at the traditional management site, the ability of supervisors to enforce alcohol policy was compromised by the policy's incompatibility with a management culture of prioritising production quotas over disciplinary action and a union culture of resisting disciplinary action against workers. In contrast, the Japanese management method helped to promote an almost alcohol-free site. In particular, there was a culture of non-adversarial union–management relations that included cooperation between workers and management in developing and implementing alcohol policy. In addition, management focused on developing a culture of cohesive work teams that promoted communication between team members and between teams and management, and emphasised the role of team leaders in resolving team problems.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED CULTURAL MODEL

The evidence reviewed indicates that the relationship between the workplace and alcohol consumption patterns may be best understood via an integrated cultural model. That is, workplaces contain stressors, controls and subcultures, and interaction between these factors results in an overall workplace culture that either supports or discourages risky drinking. Potential factors and dimensions of such a model are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: An integrated cultural model

Workplace customs and practices	Workplace conditions
These consist of: • workplace subcultures • workplace social networks • the industrial relations climate • co-worker behavioural norms at work • co-worker behavioural norms in work-related social settings • administrative/management culture.	These consist of physical factors that can impact directly on drinking or indirectly via stress or alienation such as: • dangerous work • shiftwork • physical conditions of the workplace • task complexity • lack of control over the pace or planning of work.
External factors	**Control factors**
These include those factors external to the workplace that can influence the workplace culture regarding drinking: • workers' pre-existing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours regarding drinking • the values, behaviours and expectations of family members • the social and cultural norms of the wider community.	These include those factors contributing to alcohol availability in the workplace: • physical and social availability • alcohol policy and procedures • supervision levels • low visibility of workers.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF AN INTEGRATED CULTURAL MODEL

The integrated cultural model presented in Table 5.2 has two important implications for interventions designed to minimise alcohol-related risk in the workplace. First, the model

highlights the complexity of the relationship between work and drinking. A range of factors—including existing workplace customs and practices (e.g. workplace subcultures and social networks), workplace conditions (e.g. dangerous or stressful work), external factors (e.g. workers' pre-existing attitudes and drinking patterns outside work) and control factors (e.g. alcohol availability and low supervision)—can individually, or in combination, contribute to a specific culture of workplace drinking. Given this complexity, relevant variables are likely to vary from workplace to workplace. It is therefore important that an assessment of the relevance of various variables is conducted prior to the design and implementation of specific interventions. In this way, an intervention can be tailored to meet the needs and resources of individual workplaces.

The second implication of this model is that workplace interventions need to acknowledge the pivotal role of workplace culture. Workplace culture not only has a direct influence on workers' drinking patterns but can also mediate the influence of workplace conditions, workplace controls and external factors. Central to the concept of a workplace drinking culture are the workplace norms of both management and employees concerning drinking and the way in which the workplace deals with alcohol-related issues. Thus, interventions need to include education and training programs that target the values, beliefs and behaviours of all employees. In addition, those designing interventions need to be aware of existing policies and procedures for dealing with production, disciplinary, industrial and safety issues. That is, consideration needs to be given to the pre-existing workplace culture. If, for example, the workplace features a high degree of union militancy, peer-based interventions based on workplace safety issues may be more effective than supervisory interventions based on production issues. Examples of a cultural approach to the development and implementation of workplace strategies to reduce risky drinking patterns are presented in Case studies 5.1 and 5.2. Both examples target the existing workplace culture by adopting a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the particular circumstances of each organisation.

CASE STUDY 5.1

THE BUILDING INDUSTRY DRUG AND ALCOHOL SAFETY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The construction industry is second only to mining in terms of workplace safety risk. It has a history of union militancy and a culture of heavy drinking. A large proportion of workers regularly drink at high levels and engage in illicit drug use (Berry et al. 2007). Out of concern for worker well-being and safety, a worker-driven alcohol and other drug (AOD) safety and rehabilitation program was developed and implemented in NSW in 1989, and is now in national operation. The program takes a whole-of-industry approach and works with the three main industry stakeholders—workers, employers and unions—to ensure it addresses the complex culture of the building industry. The program is peer-based and encourages workers to improve safety on building sites. It also informs workers of available alcohol treatment options. To achieve cultural change in the industry, the program uses a range of strategies including consultation, education, training and referral. The program has been

successful in achieving cultural change around drinking. For example there has been a change in managerial support for work-related drinking. In the past, drinking was part of important work-related rituals (such as site barbecues) that traditionally marked completed stages of a job. These events usually involved the free supply of alcohol by the employer. Now, although barbecues are still conducted to celebrate the completed stages of a job, they are conducted on site without alcohol or off site with alcohol.

CASE STUDY 5.2
THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND OTHER DRUGS SERVICE

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has traditionally had a strong drinking culture. Most ADF establishments have at least one 'wet' mess where subsidised alcohol is readily available to personnel, and many long-standing ADF traditions, customs and celebrations involve drinking. In 2002, in growing recognition of the potentially negative consequences of risky AOD use, the ADF established the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Service (ATODS).

The main objective of the ATODS is to influence ADF policies and practices and to facilitate environments that minimise problematic AOD use. Apart from providing ADF personnel with access to clinical interventions, it also delivers a multilevel AOD training and education program and provides specialist advice to senior officers and health professionals. Examples include professional training to build the capacity of health professionals to deal with AOD issues and prevention training that promotes responsible drinking.

The ATODS has been successful in changing customs and practices concerning AOD use within the ADF on several levels. Prior to 2002, many ADF health professionals were reluctant to deal with the AOD-related issues of ADF personnel, as they did not see it as a legitimate part of their role. The professional training delivered by the ATODS has allowed ADF health professionals to recognise that responding to AOD issues is not only legitimate, but has also increased their confidence and skills. Similarly, the introduction of the ATODS has seen changes to alcohol-related customs such as the 'boozer parade'. This practice involved attending the wet mess on paydays, locking the doors and not allowing personnel to leave until they were intoxicated. Since the introduction of the ATODS, changes in policy, attitudes and behaviour have resulted in this practice being actively discouraged.

CONCLUSION

A cultural model is a useful tool for explaining the relationship between workplaces and the drinking patterns of employees. The integrated model we propose considers the effects of workplace stressors and controls; recognises that individual perceptions and beliefs about alcohol use mediate these effects; and explains the psychosocial processes involved in the development and maintenance of workplace cultures and drinking norms. The cultural model also recognises the important role of environmental factors, especially the

alcohol-related culture of the work organisation. Most importantly for policy and practice, the processes that lead to the development of alcohol-related norms can also be used to develop ways to reduce alcohol-related risk by creating norms that promote low-risk drinking. The workplace has great potential for the implementation of cost-effective strategies to prevent and address risky drinking patterns.