

Media Release

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NEW DATA SHOWS BOOZE-LOVING NATION STILL DRINKING AT RISKY LEVELS

Cancer Council concerned as new AIHW data shows many still drinking at risky levels

Cancer Council has appealed to Australians to reconsider their drinking habits, with new data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) showing many Australians have drinking habits that are putting them at risk.

AIHW's new Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs data showed that in 2017-18 the majority of Australians drank alcohol, with nearly one in five Australians consuming alcohol at levels that put them at risk of harm over their lifetime.

The new figures come as recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics also showed many Australians turned to alcohol during the peak of COVID-19 lockdowns, with more than 1 in 10 (14 per cent) reporting an increase in alcohol consumption.

Clare Hughes, Chair of Cancer Council's Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee said "The data released today shows that nearly 80 per cent of Australians drink and one in five drink at levels that put them a risk of developing alcohol-related chronic conditions.

"It also showed alcohol is the most common drug that people seek help for. So, while alcohol is legal and a socially accepted substance, we know that its use creates a significant health, social and economic burden for Australians.

"Alcohol is linked to increased risk of seven types of cancer including cancer of the breast, bowel and mouth and nearly 3,500 cancer cases can be attributed to alcohol consumption each year.

"Research has shown that if all Australians stuck to the current alcohol guidelines, we could prevent 30,000 cancer cases over the next 25 years, so there are significant benefits in reducing alcohol consumption in Australia."

"While some people may turn to alcohol during stressful times, Cancer Council encourages Australians to re-think how much they are drinking and look for healthier alternatives to manage stress.

Australia's current National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) alcohol guidelines recommend no more than two standard drinks per day Ms Hughes explained that there is still some risk with any level of alcohol consumption and the more you drink, the greater the risk.

"What many people don't realise is that any amount of alcohol increases your risk of cancer, so if you do choose to drink, make sure you drink within the guidelines and try to have some alcohol-free days every week."

Cancer Council commended the Australian Government on their recent announcement of an additional \$6 million in funding to support drug and alcohol services for people who needed assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cancer Council has recommended a range of policy reforms to address Australia's high levels of alcohol consumption including allocating a proportion of alcohol taxation revenue to cover the cost of alcohol-related harm as well as education, harm prevention and alcohol treatment programs.



The charity supports a volumetric tax on alcohol that would see alcohol taxed according to the alcohol content, meaning the higher the alcohol content, the higher the tax.

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