



MEDIA RELEASE

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AIHW's alcohol findings reinforce ongoing trend of a positive Australian drinking culture

Findings released today from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) *'National Drug Strategy Household Survey detailed report: 2013'¹* suggest that Australians are taking positive steps to moderate their alcohol consumption, according to DrinkWise.

The AIHW survey found that the majority of the population are drinking moderately, with nearly half taking action to reduce their alcohol intake in 2013. This has also played out in the decreasing numbers of individuals drinking daily and drinking at risky levels nationally.

Key findings from the AIHW report² suggest:

- Overall, Australia has seen a decrease in the proportion of daily drinkers; this reduction was most noticeable amongst people in their late 30's to 50's.
- A lower proportion of Australians aged 14 years or older consumed alcohol in risky quantities in 2013 compared to 2010.
- Over 80% of Australians (81.8%) aged 14 years or older drank within the lifetime risk guidelines of no more than two standard drinks per day on average.
- In 2013, most people in Australia aged 12 years or older drank at levels that did not place them at risk of harm over their lifetime – they either drank at low risk levels (58%) or abstained (24%).
- The number of people in Australia drinking at levels that placed them at lifetime risk of an alcohol-related disease or injury fell by approximately 250,000 people since 2010.
- The proportion of people aged 14 or older choosing to abstain from alcohol rose between 2010 and 2013 (from 19.9% to 22%); this was influenced by an increase in young people aged 12 to 17 years abstaining (increasing from 64% to 71%).
- The average age at which young people aged 14-24 years first tried alcohol has steadily risen since 1998 from 14.4 years to 15.7 years in 2013.
- A substantial number of drinkers (49%) have taken action to reduce their drinking either by the amount of alcohol consumed at one time (30%) or number of drinking occasions (29%).

DrinkWise chief executive John Scott said this new research based on Government statistics showed that targeted interventions such as those provided by DrinkWise since 2005 are having a profound effect on the Australian drinking culture.

"The AIHW's findings reinforce the importance of educating the community about drinking responsibly, and delivering targeted and tailored approaches to those drinking at risky levels," Mr Scott said.

¹ The National Drug Strategy Household Survey is conducted every three years. The 2013 survey collected data from nearly 24,000 people across Australia from 31 July to 1 December 2013.

² AIHW National Drug Household Survey: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs/ndshs-2013/ch4/>

Mr Scott indicated that its own independent research, commissioned via Quantum Market Research's AustraliaSCAN³ social monitor, indicates comparable signs of a cultural change in people's attitudes and behaviours towards drinking.

"Our research also suggests that in the last three years, more Australians believe having a few drinks with friends remains a great tradition, so long as we don't overdo it," Mr Scott said.

"However, we recognise within these new results that there remains a small proportion of Australians drinking at very high levels – particularly young Australians aged 18 to 24 years old and those living in remote or very remote locations – who are less likely to be aware of the number of standard drinks an adult can drink before putting their health at risk."

DrinkWise will launch the second phase of its *How to Drink Properly* campaign this week to coincide with Schoolies 2014 and remind school-leavers of the risks of excessive alcohol consumption.

"It is encouraging to see an increasing proportion of young Australians abstaining from alcohol and delaying their first alcoholic drink, and our campaigns such as *Kids Absorb your Drinking* and the delay message within our *Kids and Alcohol Don't Mix* campaign are certainly being seen in these pleasing results," Mr Scott said.

"It is also a move in the right direction that the proportion of young adults drinking at very high levels is on the decline; however, it is the 18 to 24 year-old age group with the highest proportions drinking at very high levels, so we should not be complacent but instead continue to work with those who have a genuine interest in reducing harm.

"DrinkWise's targeted education activities should be recognised as part of a collaborative effort between government, industry and the community to create a safer, healthier drinking culture in Australia."

DrinkWise has also unveiled its new website to coincide with the initiative, providing comprehensive information and advice to promote responsible drinking, including alcohol facts, risk factors, standard drinks calculator and health tools. See www.drinkwise.org.au.

DrinkWise Australia is an evidence-based social change organisation dedicated to changing the Australian drinking culture to one that is safer and healthier. We do this through national information and education campaigns, partnerships with community leaders and organisations, and the development of practical strategies and resources that better support the community in relation to the responsible use of alcohol. DrinkWise Australia is funded through voluntary industry contributions across the alcohol sector, and has previously been in receipt of funding from both Coalition and Labor governments.

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For more information, please contact:

Kate Allinson
Porter Novelli Melbourne
kallinson@porternovelli.com.au
03 9289 9555 / 0449 041 540

Arj Ganeshalingam
Porter Novelli Melbourne
aganeshalingam@porternovelli.com.au
03 9289 9555 / 0421 690 204

³ AustraliaSCAN is an annual longitudinal research study tracking the social values of Australians across a broad range of topics and subjects for more than 15 years. DrinkWise has been a subscriber since 2007, allowing it to place a number of questions within the monitor as a means of tracking broad sentiment Australians have towards the culture of alcohol in society.