

MEDIA RELEASE

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- Public Health Association of Australia
- Alcohol & other Drugs Council of Australia
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- National Preventative Health Taskforce
- Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

SUPPORT POLICE BY PREVENTING ALCOHOL-FUELLED VIOLENCE, SAY HEALTH GROUPS

Leading Australian health organisations today voiced strong support for police in Australia and New Zealand in their tough stand against alcohol-related violence.

Five major health organisations have added their weight to calls for drastic action to limit the harmful effects of alcohol on the community.

The Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), the National Preventative Health Taskforce (NPHT), and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) are urging federal, State and Territory governments to take the necessary action so that measures such as the forthcoming 2-day ‘Operation Unite’ on December 11 and 12 will not be necessary.

Professor Rob Moodie, Chair of the National Preventative Health Taskforce, agreed that the need for such high-profile involvement by law enforcement authorities should be a wake-up call to the community that the irresponsible consumption of alcohol needs to be addressed through a number of strategies: “The police shouldn’t be on their own about this”, Professor Moodie said.

“The police action on December 11 and 12 should be used to spearhead a comprehensive approach to reducing harmful levels of alcohol consumption. This needs to involve a range of measures, including controls on licensing, pricing, physical availability, advertising and promotion,” Professor Moodie said.

According to PHAA President, Professor Mike Daube: “The Australian and New Zealand police commissioners should be applauded for drawing a firm line. Health groups agree that it is time to draw a line in the sand and commit to reducing the appalling toll that alcohol takes on our health and police services. We know what needs to be done -- now is the time to do it. Health organisations strongly support police in a coordinated, united approach.”

Mr Todd Harper, CEO of VicHealth, echoed the call for prevention: “It’s easy to understand the frustration that the police must feel when the problem doesn’t seem to be getting any better. There are huge problems stemming from patterns of alcohol consumption -- the

problem is really about *how* we're drinking, and we need to get serious about how that can change."

According to ADCA CEO Mr David Templeman, "Excessive drinking is not a victimless crime. We must take the harmful effects of drinking more seriously as a culture. Our communities have the right to feel safe, and ADCA believes that community policing and law enforcement agencies must be supported by national reforms in the way alcohol is promoted, priced and licensed."

Professor George Rubin of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, said: "It is simply unacceptable that the lives of so many Australians should be threatened and compromised by the ugly consequences of alcohol-related violence. How much longer do we want to see lives destroyed due to horrific injuries just because someone was out for 'a good time'?"

These leading health groups are jointly calling on Australian governments to support law enforcement agencies by taking strong action to prevent alcohol-related violence. "Clearly, we need to do a lot more than we have been doing, and that will include some measures that will not be popular with some industry groups and sections of the community," said Professor Daube. "But if we are serious about addressing patterns of alcohol consumption, we cannot continue to ignore strategies such as well-designed controls on alcohol pricing, licensing, and promotion."

ENDS

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