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AUSTRALIANS URGED TO ADOPT NEW COMMONSENSE DRINKING GUIDELINES

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has urged Australians to adopt the new National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) Drinking Guidelines as a commonsense approach to reducing harm from drinking and moving away from our damaging drinking culture.

"It is time we woke up to the reality that we are drinking too much as a community and as individuals. The increase in drinking by young people in recent years is especially worrying," said Professor Mike Daube, President of the PHAA.

"The new guidelines will not please everybody, but the job of the NHMRC is to call the evidence as they see it. Some people may find it hard to accept that more than two drinks a day puts them at increased long-term risk, and more than four a day at real short term risk, but the evidence is conclusive. This is commonsense advice based on sound science."

"The NHMRC report and recommendations also show yet again why action is needed to stem the massive tide of alcohol promotion directed at young people – who are at the greatest risk of so many alcohol problems."

The new *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* contain four simple rules for reducing risk of alcohol-related harm in both the long and short term. Healthy adults are encouraged not to drink more than two standard drinks a day to reduce long term harm and no more than four standards drinks on any occasion to reduce the risk of short term harm. No drinking at all is advised for children under-18 and women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding.

"People must make their own judgements about what they do, but the role of the NHMRC is to give the Australian people the best scientific advice – which is that we are currently drinking too much. It is very important that people are given clear information that spells out potential risks so that they can make their decisions understanding what both the immediate and long term consequences may be," said Professor Daube.

The Drinking Guidelines take a new approach by considering both short and long term consequences, as well as providing advice that is relevant in both contexts. The guidelines also encourage people to consider the impact their drinking has on those around them when making decisions about their level of alcohol intake.

For further information/comment:
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