



Australian Government

National Health and
Medical Research Council

N H M R C

6 March 2009

MEDIA RELEASE,
Embargoed until 11AM, Friday 6 March 2009

NEW ALCOHOL GUIDELINES SAY REDUCE DRINKING TO REDUCE RISK

The new *Australian Alcohol Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* announced today recommend that both women AND men drink no more than two standard drinks a day over their lifetime if they want to reduce their risk of being harmed by an alcohol-related injury or disease.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Guidelines were released today in Melbourne following three years of extensive research and consultation by a committee of high level experts, chaired by Professor Jon Currie, Department of Addiction Medicine, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, and Melbourne University.

Chief Executive Officer of the NHMRC, Professor Warwick Anderson, said the previous 12 guidelines had been simplified to 4. "The new guidelines are based on the risk over a lifetime, and provide advice on lowering your risk from alcohol related harm, but ultimately it's your choice."

Professor Currie said "The guidelines aren't telling you what you can or can't do. They aim to help Australians make their own informed choices about alcohol and how much risk they want to take with their health. Two standard drinks a day keeps your risk below 1 chance in 100 of dying as a result of drinking. This is slightly less than your risk of dying in a car accident one day."

The guidelines also look at drinking on a single occasion, like going to the pub, having a drink with friends or having drinks at home. (A single occasion is defined in the guidelines as a sequence of drinks taken without blood alcohol concentration reaching zero in between). For healthy men and women, drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol related injury arising from that occasion.

Young people under 18 are advised not to drink, as are pregnant and breastfeeding women.

State and Commonwealth Health Authorities will use the guidelines to develop community awareness campaigns.

The Guidelines can be found at www.nhmrc.gov.au

Media Contacts: Marilyn Chalkley 0434 369 981

Carolyn Norrie 0422 008 512

WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA

www.nhmrc.gov.au

GPO Box 1421, Canberra ACT 2601

Level 5, 20 Allara Street, Canberra City ACT

T. 13 000 NHMRC (13 000 64672) or +61 2 6217 9000 F. +61 2 6217 9100 E. nhmrc@nhmrc.gov.au

ABN 88 601 010 284