



**The Hon Mary Wooldridge MP**  
Minister for Mental Health  
Minister for Community Services  
Minister for Disability Services and Reform

**Jerril Rechter**  
VicHealth CEO

---

## Joint Media Statement

### Minister Mary Wooldridge and VicHealth CEO team up to take on FebFast

Victorian Minister for Mental Health Mary Wooldridge and VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter have joined thousands of Australians who have pledged to go alcohol-free for February.

Ms Wooldridge and Ms Rechter are encouraging all Victorians to consider taking part in the annual FebFast event, to support someone who is, or to simply use the month as an opportunity to reflect on alcohol and its place in our society.

Ms Wooldridge, who has participated in FebFast since it started in 2007, said FebFast nicely complements the Victorian Government and VicHealth's joint summer campaign, *Name that Point*, which offers cash prizes to young people who come up with a witty name for the point in the evening where drinking can start to get out of hand.

"FebFast reflects a growing awareness in Victoria and around the country about just how ingrained alcohol is in our everyday lives. It has helped to shine a light on these issues by challenging people to take time out from alcohol and this is a discussion we hope will continue throughout the year," Ms Wooldridge said.

"Like FebFast, the *Name That Point* campaign also encourages people to really think about the place alcohol has in their lives and within the broader community.

"It does not tell people what to do or how to run their lives. It actually invites Victorians to talk about how they'd like our community's relationship with alcohol to be. And we know that we're ready for a change: a 2013 national poll found that 75 per cent of Australians believe we have a problem with excessive drinking."

On the cusp of her third FebFast, Ms Rechter said she understood why nine out of 10 previous FebFasters said they would do it again.

"I'm not a heavy drinker, but FebFast helped me to understand how easy it is to slip into the habit of having a few drinks at the end of the working week because that's what everyone else does. It's fantastic how FebFast challenges the cultural myth that drinking large amounts of alcohol is an unavoidable part of being social and having a good time," Ms Rechter said.

.../2

“Alcohol is very much in the public consciousness right now and it’s great to see robust discussions occurring, many of which highlight the need to examine our drinking culture.

“FebFast and *Name that Point* give people the opportunity to discuss the place alcohol has in our lives, without judgment.”

VicHealth was proud to award FebFast the 2013 Victorian Health Promotion Award for Reducing Harm from Alcohol in December last year at its annual awards night.

FebFast facts:

- A VicHealth survey of 1,300 FebFast participants, conducted in 2011, showed that the vast majority of participants reaped ongoing health benefits.
- Participants surveyed named saving money, getting more sleep and losing weight as the leading benefits and nine out of 10 participants said they would do it all again. On top of the short-term wins, many who took part in the annual fundraiser reported longer term benefits.
- Following FebFast, two-thirds of participants set aside alcohol free days each week, half cut down on alcohol consumption and 70 per cent said they are now more conscious of how much they are drinking.
- The money raised during FebFast helps young Australians take control of their lives and address their alcohol and drug problems. Sign up for FebFast at [www.FebFast.org.au](http://www.FebFast.org.au)

**Media contacts:**

---

<b>Michael Moore</b>	<b>0400 719 355</b>	<a href="mailto:michael.moore@minstaff.vic.gov.au">michael.moore@minstaff.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>(Minister Wooldridge)</b>
<b>Jane Gardner</b>	<b>0435 761 732</b>	<a href="mailto:jgardner@vichealth.vic.gov.au">jgardner@vichealth.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>(VicHealth)</b>