

Media Release

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Moderation the key to kicking goals this grand final weekend

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter has urged sports fans to take care when consuming alcohol ahead of this weekend's AFL and NRL grand finals.

While major sporting events like the AFL and NRL grand finals are significant cultural events in Australia, they can also be associated with risky drinking and harm.

A 2016 VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey of more than 3,000 Australians found 15 per cent of respondents believe it's acceptable to get drunk to the point of losing balance at major sporting events.

A further 15 per cent of respondents were not bothered either way.

The findings support evidence from a VicHealth and Eastern Health and Turning Point Alcohol and Drug study that examined the pattern of alcohol and other harms associated with major sporting events in Melbourne for the nine-year period from 2001-2009.

That research found a significant increase in cases of acute intoxication, levels of violence and emergency department presentations on and around major sporting events like the AFL Grand Final.

Ms Rechter urged football and rugby league fans to have fun, be safe and drink in moderation while cheering on their favourite teams and stars.

"Sporting finals are an exciting time for fans and a great opportunity for friends and family to get together and celebrate some of our top Australian athletes," Ms Rechter said.

"Having Melbourne-based teams in the AFL and NRL grand finals just adds to the excitement.

"We know that most Victorians enjoy a drink and that alcohol is part of most social occasions. However, higher levels of social acceptability of being drunk at major sporting events is worrying given that the more people drink, the more likely they are to suffer from an injury or accident and increase their risk of chronic disease.

"Sports fans can still cheer on their favourite teams and players while drinking in moderation. Alternating alcoholic drinks with water and eating food to slow the absorption of alcohol can be good ways to stay safe and reduce your risk of harm."

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 while drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.

By 2023 VicHealth wants to see one million more Victorians with better health and wellbeing including 200,000 Victorians drinking less alcohol.

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