



Evaluation of the VicHealth Alcohol Culture Change campaigns

Executive summary

The Alcohol Culture Change program was a partnership between the Victorian Department of Health and VicHealth, that aimed to promote better attitudes to drinking and drunk behaviour among young Victorians aged 16–29. VicHealth research showed that two-thirds of young people drink in a way that increases their risk of short-term harm and almost half feel obliged to drink when at a pub or bar. However, 61% also reported that they don't drink to get drunk.¹

VicHealth is committed to alcohol culture change and has invested in a range of initiatives including Hello Sunday Morning, Alcohol Innovation Challenge, Good Sports and Creating Healthy Workplaces.

To complement VicHealth's ongoing commitment to culture change, VicHealth implemented a two-phased marketing program to challenge the acceptance of intoxication and champion moderate drinking. The first phase, NameThatPoint was an online community conversation, encouraging young Victorians to name the point in the night where 'clear thinking turns to more drinking'. Using humour and a relatable approach, the campaign resulted in 40% of the audience who visited the NameThatPoint website discussing the campaign with friends and family. A further 61% of web visitors reported they had thought about the culture of drinking in Victoria, and one third also reported drinking less since seeing the campaign.

Building on the insights from NameThatPoint, the No Excuse Needed campaign continued to champion a more moderate drinking culture via a positively framed social marketing campaign. This high profile campaign used humour to highlight that people shouldn't feel the need to make up an excuse to say no to a drink. The campaign applied the social norms theory (see page 3) highlighting that most young Victorians don't drink with the intention to get drunk. The campaign call to action was 'Join the 61% of young Victorians who don't drink to get drunk'.

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The No Excuse Needed campaign was widely recognised, with 46% of the target audience reporting they had seen the campaign. One third of those who recognised the campaign reported drinking less alcohol, and one third took an action around their own alcohol consumption behaviour as a result of seeing the campaign. The campaign had a particularly strong impact on attitudes and perceptions of risky drinkers. The results of both phases of social marketing activity indicate that culture change approaches, when implemented in conjunction with wider programs and initiatives, have promise in promoting better attitudes and behaviour in relation to drinking and drunk behaviour.

Victoria's need for culture change

While overall levels of alcohol consumption in Victoria are relatively stable, alcohol-related harms including hospitalisations and ambulance attendances have significantly increased in recent years.² Most Victorians drink responsibly, however a significant proportion of the population still drink in a manner that puts them at risk of injury from a single occasion of drinking, or at risk of a chronic disease, such as cancer, cardiovascular and digestive diseases, over the longer term.

How people are affected by alcohol-related harm varies; incidences of short-term harm from alcohol misuse are typically borne by men and young people, whereas chronic diseases from alcohol use are more prevalent with people from low socioeconomic backgrounds,³ and people living in rural, and regional areas, men and older people.⁴ Alcohol misuse causes harm to others beyond the individual drinker, as it is estimated that because of the drinking of others 367 people died and nearly 14,000 people were hospitalised in 2005.⁵

The Victorian Government's plan

The Alcohol Culture Change program was developed by VicHealth, in partnership with the Victorian Government Department of Health. This program tackled culture, as it was recognised that an individual's alcohol consumption does not happen in isolation – it is embedded into a context of values, attitudes and other factors that combine to form a drinking culture.

The program also delivered against VicHealth's [Action Agenda for Health Promotion 2013–2023](#) which outlined the strategic approach required to reduce the short- and long-term impacts alcohol has on the lives of many Victorians. Guided by the 10-year goal, '*more Victorians drinking less alcohol*' and three-year priority, '*more people actively seeking the best ways to reduce alcohol-related harm*', VicHealth aimed to build an improved drinking culture among Victorians, through pioneering research and innovative programs and campaigns.

Understanding Victoria's alcohol culture

To further understand the Victorian alcohol culture, in 2013 VicHealth conducted an Australia-first population-wide survey⁶ to measure alcohol culture, and provide a baseline by which efforts to shift culture can be assessed over time. This survey examined social norms, attitudes and beliefs toward alcohol and intoxication among Victorians aged 16 years and older.

Key findings include:



61%
of young drinkers do not intend to get drunk when drinking



Two-thirds of young people drink in a way that increases their risk of short-term harm

- Almost half (42%) of young Victorian drinkers feel obliged to drink when socialising, compared to a quarter of those aged over 30 (23%).
- When compared to Victorians aged 30 or older, 16–29 year olds are more likely to believe it is acceptable to be drunk (to the point of losing balance) some or most times at venues like pubs, bars and clubs (73% v. 37%), at barbeques at their own house (35% v. 17%) and at sporting events (32% v. 14%).
- A majority of those aged 16–29 years overestimate the percentage of people their age who drink alcohol once a week or more often.
- 53% of 16–29 year olds believe that getting drunk (to the point of losing balance) every now and then is not a problem.

Other national and state-wide surveys^{7,8} indicate that, while young Australians are increasingly delaying their uptake of alcohol and consuming less on each drinking occasion, those aged 18–29 are still more likely to drink at levels that put them at risk of short-term harm. Further, at a Victorian population level, overall alcohol-related harms including hospitalisations and ambulance attendances have significantly increased in recent years.⁹

The role for social marketing

From this research, it was identified that social marketing activity could drive a shift in the culture in the broader community, by focusing on the group who is most likely to demonstrate harmful drinking behaviours now – **young people and young adults**.

A number of principles were adopted in framing the program:

1. For culture to change, the community that absorbs and reflects that culture must be directly involved in reshaping it.
2. Recent VicHealth-funded research¹⁰ indicates that risky drinkers may be less receptive to negative messaging about the harms of alcohol, suggesting the need to test a positively-framed approach that acknowledges the widespread social use of alcohol, but challenges the acceptance of intoxication.
3. An overwhelming majority of Australians agree that alcohol is a serious issue facing our community¹¹ pointing to a readiness for change.

The Alcohol Culture Change campaigns were delivered over two phases:

- Phase one – NameThatPoint
- Phase two – No Excuse Needed

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

VicHealth is committed to alcohol culture change and has invested in a wide range of initiatives that complement the social marketing activity, this includes:

- **Hello Sunday Morning** – a movement towards a better drinking culture. HSM provides a platform for individuals to create meaningful change in their lives by taking a short break from alcohol.
- **Alcohol Innovation Challenge** – in 2015 the challenge provided start-up funding to four promising approaches to changing Victoria's drinking culture by either reducing the amount of alcohol Victorians drink or increasing the acceptability of saying no to a drink or drinking a bit less.
- **Good Sports** – an accreditation style program that aims to change the alcohol drinking culture in Victorian sporting clubs.
- **Creating Healthy Workplaces** – new and innovative approaches that focus on changing the policies and settings that support the use of alcohol in the workplace.

From these coordinated investments, VicHealth aims to change the culture of drinking in Victoria.



The social norms theory seeks to influence behaviour by altering perceptions of what is considered 'normal' behaviour¹².

Within this context, the campaigns were looking to challenge the social norm of people feeling obligated to have an alcoholic drink in certain environments.

Alcohol Culture Change social marketing campaigns

Phase one – NameThatPoint

The first phase of activity was launched in December 2013 with an online community conversation called [NameThatPoint](#), a campaign designed to engage the target audience of young Victorians aged 16–29 in an online dialogue about the role of alcohol in our culture. The campaign ran for 15 weeks and was highly successful, achieving a significant level of engagement with the audience, including:

45,667

unique website visitors

143,063

video views on YouTube

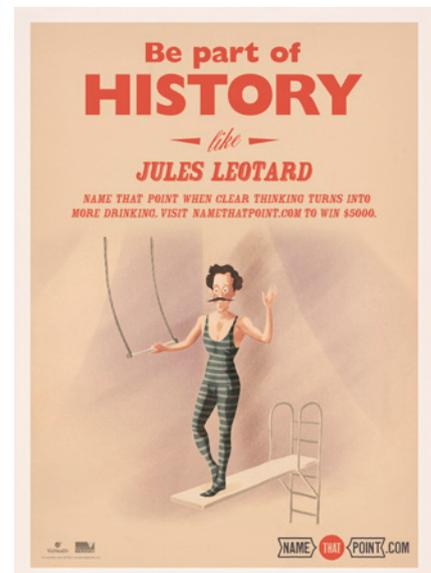
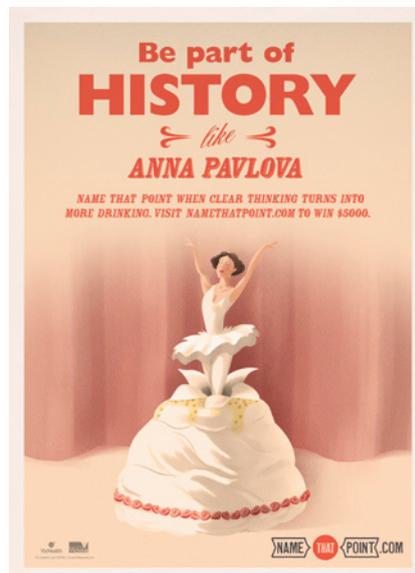
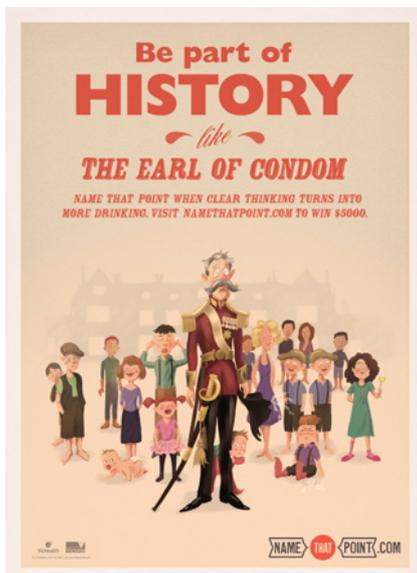
354

media mentions

A competition engaged the audience to name that point in the night where clear thinking turns to more drinking. Entries to the competition were incentivised with an overall prize of \$5000 and small prizes for voting. Questions were posed (open and closed-ended) that were rotated on a weekly basis.

The winning name was 'The 'Chill' Point' – the point in the night where you have to chill out, reassess and have clarity so you can continue your night in a safe and fun manner.

Posters



Phase two – No Excuse Needed

No Excuse Needed was a mass-awareness social marketing campaign that took place between September and December 2014. The campaign used humour to highlight that people shouldn't feel the need to make up an excuse when they don't want to have another drink. It provided a call to action for the target audience to 'join the 61% of young Victorians who don't drink to get drunk'. The statistic was drawn from VicHealth's 2013 research.¹

The No Excuse Needed campaign was profiled in metro and regional areas via advertising in cinemas, radio stations, bus and tram shelters and in Cultural and Linguistically Diverse print publications.

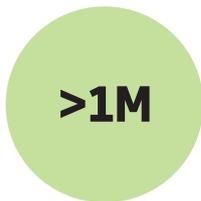
The campaign was also promoted extensively across digital channels, including YouTube, digital publishing, mobile phone advertising, online audio streaming, search advertising and through social media. The campaign was supported by a comprehensive stakeholder relations, public relations and a small grants program.

Drawing on insights from *A Snapshot of Victoria's Alcohol Culture* and themes from the NameThatPoint campaign, the aims of No Excuse Needed were:

- champion moderate drinking to normalise the behaviour among heavier drinkers, and validate those who are already moderate
- reduce the widespread acceptance of intoxication
- change the incorrect perception that most young people are drinking heavily
- challenge the social norm where people feel obligated to have an alcoholic drink in certain environments.

The social norms theory was incorporated as social norms have a powerful self-sustaining element, and in particular implicit norms are powerful and self-reinforcing.

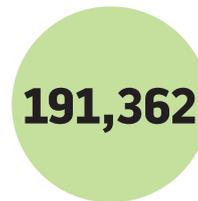
The campaign also drew upon the previously-mentioned VicHealth-funded research¹⁰ that identified four types of 'drinking identities', the *initiator*, *follower*, *protector* and *moderator*. These drinking segments were defined according to their acceptance of alcohol across society and influences on their drinking behaviour. This component of the Alcohol Culture Change program targeted two drinking types: the initiator and the follower.



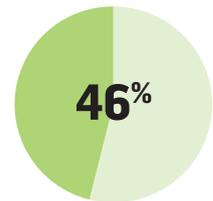
No Excuse Needed video views



visits to the No Excuse Needed website



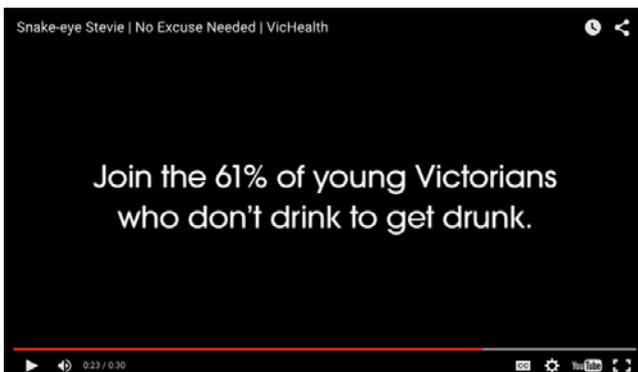
social media interactions



of the target audience recognised the campaign

The campaign achieved strong audience engagement with the No Excuse Needed videos being viewed over 1,054,407 times, including 175,616 organic views, and 878,791 paid video views. There were also 76,758 visits to the No Excuse Needed website and received 191,362 social media interactions. 46% of the target audience recognised the campaign.

Video



Understanding impact – evaluating the campaigns

NameThatPoint

Evaluation of the NameThatPoint campaign involved participants undertaking a five-minute online survey. These participants were sourced from the database of people who had visited the NameThatPoint website throughout the campaign, and therefore had direct contact with the campaign. There were 212 individual responses. This was a purposeful sample that sought to understand the impact interaction with the NameThatPoint campaign had on participants.

The recognised limitations of this evaluation methodology included the participants' recall bias and under-reporting, the limited budget didn't allow for a control or comparison group, and the survey was incentivised. This may have induced a response bias and may have impacted on the outcomes of the evaluation survey.

THE FINDINGS FROM THIS SURVEY INCLUDE:

1. Most respondents were among the target audience, but the campaign did engage with a wider audience

Over half (58%) of those who took part in the survey were within the target age group of under 29 years of age. The high proportion of participants above the target age (42%) indicates the campaign attracted interest from a broader audience than anticipated.

2. Slightly more females engaged with the website than males

Around 58% of those who took part in the survey and visited the site were females with 42% males. Although a slight over representation of women, this is broadly in line with the population gender breakdown.

3. NameThatPoint encouraged discussion among friends and family

Four in ten (41%) respondents discussed NameThatPoint with their friends and family indicating a relatable campaign. A quarter (24%) shared the site's link with others. This suggests that a dialogue was opened by the campaign.

Those who engaged with the site more frequently were more likely to forward the link to friends (51% compared to total of 24%), look at information about NameThatPoint (38% compared to total of 19%) and look for information about VicHealth (22% compared to total 9%).

4. NameThatPoint helped people feel more willing to speak about alcohol

Four in ten respondents indicated they would be either much more or slightly more willing to speak about drinking after visiting NameThatPoint.

This suggests that a willingness to speak about alcohol improved after participating in NameThatPoint.

5. After seeing the campaign, people thought more about their drinking behaviour

Before participating in NameThatPoint, 50% of respondents indicated they thought about their drinking behaviour regularly or sometimes.

After participating in NameThatPoint, this increased to 72%. This represents a significant improvement, and indicates that the campaign was effective in making people think about their own drinking behaviour.

Prior to participating in the campaign, 19% indicated they did not think about their drinking. After the campaign, this reduced to 7%.

6. After NameThatPoint, three in ten respondents self-reported to be drinking less.

Three in ten (30%) NameThatPoint participants self-reported they were drinking less than before interacting with the site.

This was even higher amongst those who interacted with the site more frequently (45% compared to 30%) indicating that those drawn into activities and frequent participation were more likely to be influenced.

Those in the target age group (16–29) were more likely to state they were drinking less (36%) compared to those above the target age (24%). This indicates that the campaign was well targeted to the intended audience.

Additionally, the campaign had a consistent influence on those with differing drinking frequencies and genders indicating a broad range of demographic groups could relate to the campaign.

7. There was an overwhelming amount of positive feedback for the campaign

- “A realistic campaign. Not trying to stop people drinking entirely but to be sensible about it”
- “Non-judgmental”
- “Entertaining and user friendly”
- “Relatable”

Overall the campaign received positive feedback, which was due to tackling a serious issue in an entertaining, non-judgemental and realistic manner using thought provoking messages.

Through the community conversation of NameThatPoint, the insights that were gained from the target audience were able to be built upon, ensuring the next phase of the campaign, No Excuse Needed, delivered a highly engaging, pertinent and effective marketing program.



No Excuse Needed

The No Excuse Needed social marketing campaign included comprehensive monitoring and evaluation. To effectively understand the impact of the campaign, a pre- and post-campaign survey was undertaken. A research agency was engaged to deliver two online surveys of young people aged 16–29, to assess the impact of the campaign on the audiences' attitudes and behaviours related to the culture of alcohol in Victoria.

Pre-campaign surveys were conducted in September 2014 with 450 respondents. A second, post-campaign survey was conducted in late January and early February 2015, with 699 respondents. To qualify to participate, respondents had to have drunk alcohol in the previous month (78%), making this a purposeful sample of young Victorian drinkers.

This evaluation strategy allowed for three types of analysis, including:

1. Results from the pre- and post-campaign surveys
2. Attitudinal differences between those who recognised the No Excuse Needed campaign compared to those that did not
3. Whether there were any attitudinal or behavioural differences recorded based upon the respondents drinking status (either low risk or risky drinker).*

Findings

The following section details findings from the pre- and post-campaign evaluation surveys of young Victorian drinkers aged 16–29. As part of this methodology, VicHealth utilised a cohort model, inviting all respondents who participated in the pre-wave to participate in the post-wave survey. The results indicate differences in attitudes, between those exposed to the campaign and those who were not, towards alcohol across key cultural measures.

The following sections examine:

1. Broader impact of the campaign, by examining pre-campaign findings versus post-campaign findings
2. Campaign awareness, measured by target audience recognition of No Excuse Needed and actions taken as a result
3. Attitudinal differences concerning moderate drinking, acceptability of drunkenness and concern for own drinking comparing responses from campaign recognisers and non-recognisers
4. The impact of No Excuse Needed on risky drinkers.

Note that all findings reported are statistically significant unless otherwise indicated.

* Participants were categorised as a 'risky drinker' if they provided a response indicating 5+ standard drinks to the following question: *On a day that you have an alcoholic drink, how many would you usually have, in terms of standard drinks?*

1. Pre- versus post-campaign findings

The pre- and post-campaign samples were compared to assess whether there were broader attitudinal shifts at a population level among young Victorians aged 16–29 between September 2014 and January/February 2015. There were some shifts in attitudes found; however, with many environmental influencers on the target audience during this timeframe, the extent to which this could be attributable to this specific campaign is not well understood. In particular, the range of promotions, activities and advertisements regarding alcohol during this time, including the Spring Racing Carnival, Christmas and New Year period, and programs such as Febfast and Hello Sunday Morning, were likely to have an impact, and so these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Where more significant differences were visible was via those exposed to the campaign, in comparison with those not exposed. This is a more accurate reflection of the impact of the campaign.

Positive attitudinal shifts among the target audience were evident in pre- and post-campaign samples, when respondents considered the acceptability of moderating their own or others' drinking. For instance, when compared to the pre-campaign sample, respondents from the post-campaign sample were more likely to agree:

- It is acceptable for me to drink moderately (83% v. 78%)
- It is acceptable for others my age to drink moderately (82% v. 73%)
- When I am drinking I like to control how much I drink (76% v. 70%).

However, the target audience's attitude toward drunkenness seemed to have become more entrenched by the end of January, with more post-campaign survey participants agreeing that 'getting drunk every now and then is not a problem', compared to pre-campaign respondents (64% v. 54%).

Further, less of this group agreed with the following statements:

- Getting drunk is unacceptable (24% v. 33%)
- It's easy to get drunk when I am out with friends (20% v. 25%).

There were no significant differences recorded in attitudes regarding perceptions of peers drinking weekly (64% pre v. 66% post).

2. Campaign awareness – target audience recognition and actions

Campaign evaluation sought to gauge levels of campaign recognition among young Victorian drinkers aged 16–29 (n=699). Half (52%) of the post-campaign sample remembered seeing some alcohol sector advertising, and of those there was a 22% unprompted awareness of No Excuse Needed messaging.

INSIGHT

Without any prompt, 22% of the target audience were able to remember the message '*you don't need to drink to get drunk*' or '*most young Victorians don't drink to get drunk*'.

When prompted, almost half (46%) of post-campaign survey respondents recognised No Excuse Needed advertising, and of this group, two-thirds recalled the main message as being '*letting you know you don't need an excuse if you don't feel like drinking*'.

Despite not having a specific behaviour change objective, No Excuse Needed had an impact on those who saw the campaign, with one in three reporting they were drinking less as a result. Further, the same proportion took an action based upon seeing the campaign, including '*speaking to a friend or family member about the advertising*' (12%), '*looked for more information from VicHealth*' (8%) or '*looked for information about drinking/alcohol consumption*' (8%). Although unexpected, this is a very positive result for the campaign, and suggests a willingness to reduce alcohol consumption among the target audience.

3. Campaign recognisers compared with campaign non-recognisers

A further analysis was conducted to assess the extent to which these attitudinal differences could be observed amongst those exposed to the campaign in comparison to those unexposed. Those who had seen the campaign were more likely (than campaign non-recognisers) to agree with the below statements:

- Getting drunk is unacceptable (28% v. 21%)
- I often think twice about getting drunk (65% v. 51%)
- When I'm drinking I like to control how much I drink (80% v. 73%).

However, significantly less of the campaign recogniser group disagreed with the statements:

- Getting drunk is unacceptable (41% v. 50%)
- I often think twice about getting drunk (12% v. 19%).

People who saw the campaign were also more likely to disagree with the statement 'I often feel I need to have a drink to have a good time' (58% v. 49%).

Further, when asked about concern for the culture of drinking among young people in Victoria, those who had seen the campaign were significantly more likely to express concern (67% v. 58%).

INSIGHT

No Excuse Needed supported campaign recognisers' self-efficacy in moderating their drinking, while decreasing the acceptability of drunkenness, at both the individual level (i.e. concern for own drinking) and more broadly (i.e. concern for the culture of drinking in Victoria).

Similarly, those who had seen the No Excuse Needed campaign expressed greater concern for their own drinking behaviour.

Despite these positive attitudinal differences, there were no differences observed in attitudes regarding perceptions of the proportion of their peers drinking, or getting drunk on a weekly basis among campaign recognisers.

4. Impact of the campaign on risky drinkers

Respondent drinking patterns were analysed and categorised as being either low risk (not more than four standard drinks on a single occasion) or risky (five or more standard drinks on a single occasion at least once in the last 12 months). Each category was further analysed against whether they had recognised the campaign.

Risky drinkers who had seen the campaign, in comparison to risky drinkers who had not seen the campaign, were significantly more likely to:

- Agree that they often think twice about getting drunk (55% v. 37%)
- Agree that getting drunk is unacceptable (26% v. 12%)
- Report that they often feel pressured to drink more than they want by friends (38% v. 27%)
- Be concerned about the culture of drinking in Victoria (55% v. 43%).

However, this group of risky drinkers were less likely to have thought about or be concerned by their own drinking behaviour (70% v. 60%), compared to those that hadn't seen the campaign, suggesting a resistance among this group to challenge their own behaviour.

Some of these attitudinal differences were evident among low risk drinkers who had seen No Excuse Needed, compared to those who had not. For instance, low risk drinkers who recognised the campaign were more likely to:

- Agree that it is acceptable for others my age to drink moderately (84% v. 77%)
- Think twice about getting drunk (72% v. 59%)
- Be concerned about the culture of drinking in Victoria (76% v. 66%)
- Express concern about their own drinking behaviour (34% v. 19%).

INSIGHT

The campaign had an impact on those in the 'risky drinking' category, with attitudinal differences observed relating to the acceptability of drunkenness, pressure to drink more than they want to, and concern for Victoria's drinking culture.

In addition, low risk drinkers who saw the campaign were more likely to be concerned about the culture of drinking in Victoria, and express concern about their own drinking behaviour.

Key learning opportunities

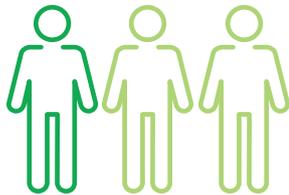
The Alcohol Culture Change program has had an impact on the attitudes of the target audience group and, to some extent, has been able to enact self-reported behaviour change with the target demographic.

The evaluation findings of No Excuse Needed demonstrated that it was particularly well received overall, with exceptional recognition of 46% from the target audience. The campaign's mix of traditional and digital media enabled the target audience to experience the campaign across a variety of mediums, ensuring frequency was high and the opportunity to understand and engage with the messaging optimal.

The use of video as a medium is highly engaging for this target demographic, and is an effective way of delivering a humorous and positively framed approach to this moderate drinking message.

Social norms and positively framed approach

Leveraging social norms theory proved an effective method for the No Excuse Needed campaign, as there were a range of attitudinal differences evident among those who had seen the campaign, indicating that it was successful in promoting moderate drinking, while also decreasing the social acceptability of drunkenness. Campaign recognisers were also more likely to express concern about their drinking.



A third of campaign recognisers reported consuming less alcohol as a result of seeing No Excuse Needed – an unintended, though welcome, outcome.

The evaluation also shows that the campaign's greatest impact was among those most embedded in the culture of drinking in Victoria – young people drinking at levels that put them at risk of harm in the short term. As with all campaign recognisers, this group was likely to express concern about the culture of drinking in Victoria and agree that getting drunk is unacceptable. However, risky drinkers who had seen the campaign were also more likely to report feeling pressured to drink. This indicates that by highlighting the social pressure to drink, and the 'need' for an excuse when not drinking in a humorous tone, the campaign has increased awareness of the effects of peer pressure among those most likely to feel it.

While there were a number of positive attitudinal differences among those who had seen the campaign regarding the acceptability of moderate drinking, for either the individual drinker or their peers, there were no discernible differences in estimates of the proportion of young people drinking alcohol or getting drunk each week. This suggests that although the campaign successfully championed 'moderation', it was not able to challenge the more deeply engrained perceptions of others' drinking behaviours.

Further program and campaign work is required to fully embed the social norm of moderate drinking.

- ¹ VicHealth (2014) *A snapshot of Victoria's alcohol culture: Selected findings* (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/a-snapshot-of-victorias-alcohol-culture).
- ² Department of Health 2012, *Reducing the alcohol and drug toll: Victoria's plan 2013–2017*, Victorian Department of Health, Melbourne.
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- ⁶ VicHealth 2014, *A snapshot of Victoria's alcohol culture: selected findings* (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/a-snapshot-of-victorias-alcohol-culture).
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- ⁸ AIHW 2013, *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* (www.aihw.gov.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs/ndshs/).
- ⁹ Turning Point 2014, *Trends in alcohol and drug related ambulance attendances in Victoria* (www.turningpoint.org.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/TP.ambocallout.fullreport.080514.pdf).
- ¹⁰ VicHealth 2013, *Drinking-related lifestyles: exploring the role of alcohol in Victorians' lives Qualitative Research Report* (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/drinking-related-lifestyles).
- ¹¹ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education 2014, *FARE Annual Alcohol Poll* (www.fare.org.au/research-development/community-polling/2014-poll/).
- ¹² Burchell, K., Rettie, R. and Patel, K. (2013), *Marketing social norms: Social marketing and the 'social norm approach'*. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 12: 1–9. doi: 10.1002/cb.1395.



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