

MEDIA RELEASE

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## One in two Australians taking action to cut back on the booze: report

FEDERAL: A new report released today on the state of Australia's health shows half of all Australians (48.2 per cent) are taking action to reduce their drinking.

"We know that drinking alcohol contributes to the leading causes of disease in Australians –heart disease, strokes and cancer, so it's very positive that so many people are trying to cut down," said Robin Room, Director - AER Centre for Alcohol Policy Research at Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's biennial *Australia's Health 2010* report shows that the impact alcohol has on health far outweighs any possible benefits. The report quotes National Health and Medical Research Council findings, which show benefits from alcohol might occur at very low levels of drinking, but it is doubtful there are any benefits at all.

"Consumers deserve to know that there is very little protective effect for their physical health from drinking," said Mr Room.

"In fact, the only group that small amounts of alcohol has been proven to benefit are women aged over 65, who traditionally aren't big drinkers anyway. For the rest of us, it's a potentially devastating drug that takes 3000 lives and costs taxpayers \$15.3 billion every year," said Mr Room.

"We hope more Australians become aware of just how harmful alcohol is for our health and take simple steps to reduce the amount they drink," added Mr Room.

Of the reported 48.2 per cent of Australian drinkers who have taken steps to reduce their alcohol intake, one in three had either reduced the number of drinks in one sitting or the number of times they go out to drink. One in 10 drinkers had quit alcohol altogether.

About 1 in 10 Australian adults put their health at long term risk by drinking too much. Similarly, double that number drink in a way that is risky in the short term.

The report also predicted a 10 percent increase in cancer cases in 2010, compared to 2006. Alcohol is second only to tobacco as the most harmful drug in Australia. The World Health Organisation has classed alcohol as a Group 1 carcinogen, which is the highest classification. This means that alcohol is a cause of cancer and puts alcohol in the same class as tobacco. Drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancers of the:

- mouth
- throat (larynx and pharynx)
- oesophagus
- bowel (colon and rectum)
- liver; and
- female breast.

Policy reform that tackles the availability, price and promotion of alcohol is needed to reduce the harm that alcohol causes to Australians, such as cancer. To view the *Australia's Health 2010* report, visit

[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm)

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The Alcohol Policy Coalition (the Coalition) is a collaboration of health agencies – Australian Drug Foundation, Cancer Council Victoria, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and VicHealth – with shared concern relating to the misuse of alcohol and its health/social impacts on the community. Alcohol remains one of the major causes of preventable death and illness in Australia. As such, the Coalition advocates for evidence based policy to prevent and reduce the harms caused by alcohol to Australians. For more information visit

[www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au](http://www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au)