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ALCOHOL – KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Busy social calendars over the holiday season can provide many opportunities to relax with a glass of beer or wine, but it is important that people know their limits, AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today.

“From enjoying a beer while watching the Ashes, to office Christmas parties, and seeing the New Year in with a glass of sparkling wine, the festive season is awash with opportunities – and, sometimes, pressure – to have a drink,” Dr Gannon said.

“The Australian guidelines recommend that both men and women avoid consuming more than four standard drinks on a single occasion to reduce the risk of alcohol-related injury, but many other factors can affect individuals.

“Alcohol and heat are a dangerous combination. In an Australian summer, it is important to be aware of the signs of dehydration, which can occur as a result of drinking too much alcohol.”

Signs of dehydration include: increased thirst; dry mouth; feeling tired or sleepy; decreased urine output; urine is more yellowish than usual; headache; dry skin; and dizziness.

Dr Gannon said that there were other risks associated with drinking too much alcohol.

“If you intend to drink, make sure you have a safe means of getting home,” he said.

“No matter how short the journey, do not be tempted to drink and drive. Too many tragedies occur on our roads over the holiday period.

“Parents may be feeling pressure to buy alcohol for their teenage children. While some States and Territories do allow alcohol to be supplied to a minor by a parent or guardian in a private place, such as the family home, unless you’re sure of the law, it is not worth the risk.

“The evidence simply does not support the notion that supplying teenagers with alcohol will reduce their overall consumption, as some parents believe.

“It is also important to remember that many emergency workers, including doctors, paramedics, and nurses will be forgoing Christmas with their own families to provide around-the-clock care for people who become unwell or are injured during their festivities.

“Sadly, we are starting to see increased rates of alcohol-related violence being committed against emergency workers and hospital doctors by the people they are trying to care for.

“Intoxication is no excuse for violence or disrespect to the healthcare workers who have come to your aid.”

Background

- In 2016, three in four (77 per cent) of Australians aged 14 and over drank alcohol in the past 12 months.
- The proportion of Australians drinking daily has declined from 8.3 per cent in 2001 to 5.9 per cent in 2016.
- Teenagers prefer pre-mixed spirits (40 per cent), adult males prefer beer (33 per cent), and adult females prefer wine (51 per cent).

- One in 10 (9.9 per cent) admitted driving while under the influence of alcohol, down from 14.3 per cent in 2007.
 - More than one in three (36 per cent) Australians aged 12 and over had consumed five or more standard drinks on a single occasion at least once in the past 12 months.
 - One in four (25 per cent) did so at least once a month, and one in seven (13 per cent) did so at least once a week.
- (Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016)
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