

MEDIA RELEASE

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AIHW REPORT REAFFIRMS NEED FOR ONGOING HARM PREVENTION WORK

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) says the report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) into the impact of alcohol and illicit drug use on the burden of disease and injury, reaffirms the need for ongoing initiatives to prevent and reduce harms.

The document highlights the extent of the avoidable short-term and long-term health effects associated with alcohol and other drugs, including several cancers, mental health disorders and dependency.

The report also outlines the various contributing factors to alcohol and other drug harms, including the impacts of social, cultural, economic and physical environments.

“The latest AIHW report demonstrates that further support is essential for the groups most vulnerable to alcohol and other drug harms, including people of low socioeconomic status and those living in remote and rural communities,” said Dr Erin Lalor, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation’s Chief Executive officer.

Whilst the AIHW report shows there was a slight downward trend in the overall burden of disease and injury from alcohol between 2003-2011, the ADF is concerned by projections that by 2020, Australia will see an increase of amphetamine use by 14% and a rise in cannabis use among women by 36%.

“Australia cannot afford to be complacent when it comes to alcohol and other drug harms. It’s essential we continue to focus on prevention and harm reduction programs and policies to ensure a healthier Australia,” Dr Lalor said.

The AIHW report acknowledges the protective factors that can help reduce alcohol and other drug-related harms, including education, employment and income.

“The Alcohol and Drug Foundation is committed to working with communities right across Australia to increase the protective factors against alcohol and other drug harms. The evidence shows that this type of primary prevention work helps save lives,” Dr Lalor added.

The ADF also believes that addressing stigma around people who use drugs is a critical factor in further reducing and preventing the burden of disease from alcohol and other drugs.

The not-for-profit encourages governments to use the AIHW report as an opportunity to continue important discussions around harm prevention and reduction.

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Media enquiries: For media enquiries, please call the Alcohol and Drug Foundation's Media Manager Carmel Green on 0430 948 380.

About the Alcohol and Drug Foundation: Celebrating nearly 60 years of service to the community, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation is one of Australia's leading bodies committed to preventing alcohol and other drug harms in communities around the nation. The Foundation reaches millions of Australians in local communities through sporting clubs, workplaces, healthcare settings and schools, offering educational information, drug and alcohol prevention programs and advocating for strong and healthy communities.