

MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSTRALIA DAY PEAK DAY FOR DRUNKENNESS AND ASSAULTS

Health experts and emergency services are urging young people to take it easy this Australia Day, with research launched in Melbourne today revealing January 26 is the worst day of the year for assaults and drunkenness for people aged under 25.

A VicHealth and Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre study of ambulance attendances, hospital emergency presentations and admissions and police data on assaults and traffic incidents in Melbourne from 2000 to 2009 reveals a surge of incidents on public holidays which involve warm weather.

Police, health, ambulance and hospital emergency department spokespeople will launch this report today at VicHealth, 15-31 Pelham Street, 10.30am – media are invited to attend.

The *Drinking cultures and social occasions** research shows that after New Year's Eve, assaults and acute intoxication among the general Melbourne population peak on Australia Day, followed by ANZAC Day.

On Australia Day, ambulance attendances for intoxicated young people more than doubled. There was an increase of more than 50 per cent of young people treated for intoxication in emergency departments, while there was a two-fold increase in people treated for injuries due to assaults.

There was also a spike in emergency department presentations related to alcohol the day before Australia Day, due to many people pre-empting the public holiday as a day to recover.

Lead author of the *Drinking cultures and social occasions* report, Turning Point's Dr Belinda Lloyd, found public holidays that involved barbeques and warm weather tended to result in overindulgence and injury.

"These holidays are associated with patriotism and national identity and while most people celebrate in a safe and respectful way, unfortunately some people get caught up in drunken aggressive behaviour," Dr Lloyd said. "These trends aren't just restricted to young people, there are elevated assaults and intoxication across the population as well."

VicHealth's alcohol program manager, Brian Vandenberg, said the results reinforce the need for responsibility by individuals, alcohol manufacturers and the community in general.

"Sadly, many Australians spend Australia Day filled with alcohol rather than national pride," he said. "Nobody wants to spend Australia Day dealing with drunken idiots in our hospitals, violent thugs on our streets, and drunk drivers on our roads."

"Adults need to set a good example of responsible alcohol consumption so that we stop sending messages to young people that it's okay to get drunk on Australia Day. We also need the makers and suppliers of alcohol to stop encouraging people to buy massive amounts of cheap booze which fuels our binge drinking culture."

Mr Vandenberg added that liquor laws in Victoria needed a revamp, to give priority to public health and protecting community safety, rather than the continuing expansion of alcohol availability.

The report is available online at <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Programs-and-Projects/Alcohol-Misuse.aspx>

Media: Jane Gardner 03 9667 1319 / 0435 761 732 or Ashlea Milner 03 9895 4879 / 0439 371 084

* See over page for a table ranking social occasions by number of alcohol-related incidents

Public holidays ranked by number of alcohol-related incidents**

Acute intoxication - day before

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	New Year's Day	New Year's Day	New Year's Day	New Year's Day
2	Labour Day	Labour Day	Australia Day	Good Friday
3	Queen's Birthday	ANZAC Day	Good Friday	ANZAC Day
4	Good Friday	Queen's Birthday	Queen's Birthday	Australia Day
5	Australia Day	Good Friday	ANZAC Day	

Acute intoxication – on the public holiday/social occasion

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	New Year's Day	New Year's Day	Not applicable	Australia Day
2	ANZAC Day	ANZAC Day		New Year's Day
3		St Patrick's Day		ANZAC Day
4				Christmas Day
5				

Assaults – the day before

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	New Year's Day	New Year's Day	New Year's Day	New Year's Day
2	Labour Day	Labour Day	Australia Day	Labour Day
3	Good Friday	Good Friday		Good Friday
4	ANZAC Day	Australia Day		Australia Day
5	Australia Day	ANZAC Day		

Assaults – on the public holiday/social occasion

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	New Year's Day	New Year's Day	New Year's Day	Australia Day
2	Australia Day	Australia Day	Australia Day	New Year's Day
3	ANZAC Day	ANZAC Day	ANZAC Day	ANZAC Day
4	St Patrick's Day	St Patrick's Day		St Patrick's Day

Motor Vehicle Accidents – the day before

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	Good Friday	Good Friday	Good Friday	Good Friday
2	Australia Day	Australia Day		ANZAC Day

Motor Vehicle Accidents – public holiday/social occasion

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	NYD	NYD	Easter	Australia Day
2	Easter Monday	Easter Monday	NYD	Queen's Birthday
3			ANZAC Day	

** NB: No entry means the data was not statically significant for that population group