

MEDIA RELEASE

1 November 2012

MELBOURNE CUP NUMBER ONE VIC SPORTS EVENT FOR BINGEING

Health experts and emergency services are urging Victorians to drink responsibly in the lead up to the 2012 Melbourne Cup, with new research revealing the race that stops a nation is also the state's most notorious event associated with acute alcohol intoxication, assaults and accidents.

The VicHealth and Eastern Health Turning Point *Drinking cultures and sporting occasions* research shows that of Melbourne's major sporting events, the Melbourne Cup tops the list as the booziest sporting event of the year.

MEDIA CALL: Spokespeople from VicHealth, Turning Point and Ambulance Victoria will be available for interviews and photographs today, Thursday 1 November at:
11am, Ambulance Victoria, 75 Brady Street, South Melbourne

The report records ambulance attendances, hospital emergency presentations and admissions and police data on assaults and traffic incidents in Melbourne from 2000 to 2009.

Lead author, Turning Point's Dr Belinda Lloyd, said this was the first time research had made a direct link between sports and alcohol-harm in the state's capital.

"The Melbourne Cup is great opportunity to catch up with family and friends and enjoy the event. However, it's a problem when alcohol becomes the central focus of the day," Dr Lloyd said.

"Whether you're on-course for the races or having a barbecue with mates, everyone should be aware of the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption."

There was also a spike in alcohol-related emergency department presentations and ambulance call outs the day before Melbourne Cup, most likely due to people pre-empting the public holiday as a day to recover. This was particularly true for young people and men.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the results reinforced the need to rethink alcohol's love affair with sports, in particular, the exposure of young people to alcohol advertising through sports.

"Alcohol is promoted heavily in the lead up to sporting events because, unfortunately, it's engrained in Aussie culture to binge drink on these occasions," Ms Rechter said.

"It's crazy that a loophole in the law allows alcohol advertising on TV during the day if it's part of live sports broadcast. This means that kids watching the Cup and other major sporting events see countless ads for alcohol. Is it any surprise this is the lead sporting event in the Victorian sports calendar for youth binge drinking?"

Box Hill Hospital Director of Emergency Services Dr Andrew Maclean said alcohol-related incidents can have an impact on emergency departments.

"We will always attend to all cases and prioritise care based upon need. However, we'd urge people to use common sense when it comes to alcohol," Dr Maclean said.

/.....continues

“Don’t engage in risk taking behaviour. Do walk away from arguments. Know when you’ve had enough, and watch out for your friends and family.”

Ambulance Victoria’s (AV) Manager of Emergency Management, Paul Holman, said it’s a great time of year to be in Melbourne.

“The days are longer, the weather’s better and the Cup Carnival is a big event on many people’s social calendars,” he said.

“We want everyone to enjoy themselves, but don’t forget it’s also your responsibility to take care of yourself and those around you. Every year we find people who start celebrating early in the day and don’t eat enough or get enough water, leaving them a lot drunker than they might otherwise be.

“Don’t forget to also take Melbourne’s weather into consideration when you’re planning your outfit and what to take. We’ve seen very warm Cup days and others where we have issued warnings to be vigilant against potential hypothermia. It’s vital to dress for the conditions.

“We have been working closely with the Victoria Racing Club to coordinate our involvement at the track. That includes the AV’s Bicycle Response Unit, which can weave through large crowds to reach patients,” Mr Holman added.

Key findings:

- The researchers looked at the Melbourne Cup, Formula 1 Grand Prix, cricket, AFL, Australian soccer, Commonwealth Games and the World Cup soccer final involving Australia.
- In general, alcohol-related incidents increase in November and December (and February for males only). Fridays and Saturdays are peak times for emergency services.
- Cases of alcohol intoxication (measured by number of ambulance attendances and emergency department presentations) increased significantly the day before the Melbourne Cup and on the Melbourne Cup. There were also significant elevations on the AFL Grand Final Day and the Commonwealth Games.
- Assaults were elevated in the lead up and on the day of the Melbourne Cup for all groups, while the day before the AFL Grand Final and the day before the Formula 1 Grand Prix showed increases for men.
- For males, there was a significant increase in motor vehicle accident presentations the day before the Melbourne Cup and the AFL Grand Final. On the day of the Melbourne Cup, motor vehicle accidents increased among young people aged 18-25.

/.....continues

Victorian sporting events and alcohol-related harm – rankings*

Acute intoxication - Day Before the Event

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	Melbourne Cup	AFL Grand Final	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup
2	AFL Grand Final	Melbourne Cup		

Acute intoxication – Sporting Events

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	Melbourne Cup	AFL Grand Final	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup
2	Commonwealth Games	Melbourne Cup		AFL Grand Final
3	AFL Grand Final	Commonwealth Games		Commonwealth Games

Assaults – Day Before the Event

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup
2	Formula 1 Grand Prix	Formula 1 Grand Prix		Formula 1 Grand Prix
3	AFL Grand Final	AFL Grand Final		AFL Grand Final

Assaults - Sporting Events

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup	Melbourne Cup
2	AFL Grand Final	AFL Grand Final	AFL Grand Final	AFL Grand Final
3	International Cricket	Formula 1 Grand Prix		International Cricket

Motor Vehicle Accidents - Day Before the Event

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	AFL Grand Final	Melbourne Cup		
2		AFL Grand Final		

Motor Vehicle Accidents - Sporting Events

Rank	All Cases	Males	Females	Youth
1	International Cricket	Formula 1 Grand Prix	AFL Grand Final	Melbourne Cup
2			International Cricket	AFL Grand Final

*Note that results are only included where the rise in harm is statistically significant

ENDS