



ALCOHOL  
HEALTHWATCH

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**Australian Alcohol Guidelines – A Beacon of Hope**

The revised Australian drinking guidelines are out for consultation and Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says they lay a stronger and sounder foundation for harm prevention efforts in this part of the world.

The draft guidelines, released by the National Health and Medical Research Council in Australia last week, propose much lower thresholds for adult drinkers – slashing the previous adult levels of 6 standard drinks a day for men and 4 for women to no more than 2 drinks a day for both men and women.

The guidelines recommend abstinence for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, bringing Australia in line with New Zealand. They also recommend no alcohol for those under the age of 15 years and that any drinking by 15-17 year olds is no more than adult level and is supervised.

Williams is encouraged by the move by Australia to base their efforts on the available evidence and give Australian public, parents and families the truth about alcohol. “There is no safe level of alcohol for everyone all of the time, and there are some circumstances where no alcohol is best. For developing babies and developing brains alcohol is simply too risky.”

She believes Australia is finally responding to the growing body of scientific understanding challenging the so called “benefits” of alcohol consumption. Williams says when you take these purported “benefits” out of the equation you are left with only harm.

While many people enjoy alcohol, they do so at varying degrees of risk. Williams says that we must look to creating an environment that supports people to choose the lower risk options, and that includes a no alcohol option.

The guidelines could have direct spin-off effect for New Zealand. The consideration of a New Zealand application to Food Standards Australia New Zealand for warning labels advising against consuming alcohol during pregnancy, has been delayed while the review of the Australian guidelines was underway. Alcohol Healthwatch believes that the new guidelines put the application on firmer ground.

Williams says the new Australian guidelines pose a challenge to New Zealand to review the advice we provide on drinking.

The draft Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines for low-risk drinking <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au>

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Action on Liquor Campaign information and briefing papers (including topics Blood Alcohol Concentration, alcohol advertising and marketing, taxation, sale of liquor) be found at [www.ahw.co.nz](http://www.ahw.co.nz)