

## Ambulance callouts for alcohol surge during special events amongst flood of alcohol advertising

New research has uncovered the alcohol industry is flooding social media with alcohol ads at times of high harms, evidenced by the latest Victorian ambulance data.

The report, *Five weeks to watch: what we can learn from alcohol harms and digital advertising data* was released today by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Turning Point, VicHealth and The University of Queensland.

The report shows that on average there are 489 ambulance callouts across Victoria for alcohol-intoxication per week in 2022-23.

In the top five weeks, callouts surged by an average of 24 per cent, at the same time that 5,104 alcohol ads launched across Meta platforms (Facebook and Instagram):

- The week after Christmas (26 December-1 January): 676 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances; 1,061 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms
- AFL Grand Final week (19-25 September): 607 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances; 764 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms
- End of summer (20-26 February): 594 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances, 1,057 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms
- The week before Christmas (19-25 December): 585 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances; 1,327 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms
- The Australia Day public holiday (23-29 January): 572 alcohol-intoxication ambulance attendances; 895 alcohol ads launched on Meta platforms

CEO of FARE, Caterina Giorgi, said people across Victoria who experience the most harm from alcohol should not be targeted with alcohol ads that encourage them to drink more.

“We know that women and children are at higher risk of violence during sports broadcasts and on public holidays, so to see alcohol companies flood social media platforms with ads during these times is appalling.

“This kind of invasive advertising flies in the face of last year’s Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches for family and domestic violence, with the Government-selected expert panel recommending that alcohol advertising be restricted, especially around sporting events.

“It’s unbelievable that right now, industry body Free TV Australia is proposing to expand its sports loophole and increase alcohol advertising during the times when we see the highest rates of harm,” she said.

VicHealth’s Acting CEO, Michelle Murray said it is alarming that people are peppered with alcohol advertising as they get together to enjoy the last week of summer.

“The research shows that the last week of summer is the third worst for ambulance callouts for alcohol intoxication.

“It’s no shock that at the same time, big business is flooding social media with alcohol advertising, putting people most at risk of alcohol related harms at even greater risk,” she said.

National treatment, research, and education centre, Turning Point is based in Victoria and collects ambulance attendance data for the state as part of the National Ambulance Surveillance System (NASS).

Dr Rowan Ogeil, Strategic Lead, National Addiction and Mental Health Surveillance Unit at Turning Point and Point and Senior Research Fellow, Eastern Health Clinical School, Monash University said there are effective treatments available for Victorians wanting to cut back or cut out alcohol.

"The last week of February is one of the top five weeks across the year associated with alcohol-related harms in Victorian NASS data, and the only one in the top five that didn't feature a public holiday.

“Previous research has demonstrated seasonal effects for alcohol-related harms which are higher in the summer season when many people are on holidays.

"Treatment and support for alcohol is effective and worth discussing with your friends and family, especially during periods where your alcohol consumption may be higher than usual.

"DirectLine is a statewide first port of call for alcohol counselling and referral in Victoria - and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 1800 888 236," he said.

-ENDS-

Media outlets are requested to promote help-seeking information when reporting on alcohol and other drugs, in line with the [Mindframe National Guidelines](#). Suggested wording relating this this media story: *If you or someone you know needs support, please call Lifeline 13 11 14, the National 24/7 Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline 1800 250 015 or 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732.*

**Available for interview:**

- Caterina Giorgi, CEO, FARE
- Dr Rowan Ogeil, Strategic Lead, National Addiction and Mental Health Surveillance Unit, Turning Point and Point and Senior Research Fellow, Eastern Health Clinical School, Monash University

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