

MEDIA RELEASE

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New campaign to support Vic men at risk from alcohol harm during pandemic

A new Hello Sunday Morning and VicHealth campaign aims to reduce men's risky drinking after research found middle-aged men were among the Victorians most at risk of harm from alcohol products during the coronavirus pandemic.

The VicHealth survey of 2,000 Victorians during the first coronavirus lockdown found men aged 45-54 years:

- Reported drinking more frequently during the lockdown period compared with the state average (28% compared with 18%)
- Were four times more likely to drink more than four standard drinks on a single occasion at least weekly than women of the same age (18% compared with 4%)
- Stated the reason for drinking more was feeling anxious or stressed (64%) and being bored (61%).

In response to these concerning findings the new campaign will encourage men to download the [Daybreak app](#) where they can access anonymous support to reduce their use of alcoholic products.

The app allows people to set goals to reduce their harm from alcohol and work with health professionals to achieve them.

VicHealth CEO Dr Sandro Demaio said it was important that men had support to deal with feelings of anxiety and stress, rather than using alcohol as a coping mechanism.

"Coronavirus has created a lot of uncertainty for many people in our community. Concerningly and at the same time, we've seen an increase in advertising from the alcohol industry promoting their products as a way to cope and get through this tough time," Dr Demaio said.

"Evidence suggests that many men – particularly older men – find it hard to talk about their emotions and have turned to alcohol during coronavirus to cope with stress and anxiety.

"We encourage men who've noticed they're drinking more alcohol products than before coronavirus to download the Daybreak app to access confidential health advice and a supportive community to reduce their drinking and protect their health."

Andy Moore, CEO of Hello Sunday Morning recognised the importance of using digital platforms to help to deliver key messages and showcase the benefits of a digital support service.

"VicHealth's survey found many Victorian men were at higher risk of alcohol harm during the first coronavirus lockdown and we believe it's an opportune time to talk to people about the potential for using technology to help them develop low-risk drinking habits," Mr Moore said.

"Daybreak does this by providing a safe and anonymous space where new members can give and receive support from other people facing the same issues with their use of alcohol. We can also profile



new members to understand their personal goals and then recommend tailored activities chosen by behavior change experts, with evidence-based success.

“Curtin University assessed this approach last year amongst 293 Daybreak users, and found that average weekly alcohol consumption fell by more than half over three months.

“Users can work together with Hello Sunday Morning’s team of health professionals to track their personal progress through weekly check-ins, and a supportive online community, all within a secure environment.”

Media Contacts

Hello Sunday Morning:

Ranya Alkadamani

ranya@impactgroupinternational.com

0434 664 589

VicHealth:

Shannon Crane, Senior Media Advisor

scrane@vichealth.vic.gov.au

0432 157 270

About Hello Sunday Morning

Since 2010 Hello Sunday Morning has grown to be one of the largest digital movements for alcohol behaviour change. Through a combination of positive health promotion campaigns and behaviour change products, we support individuals to change their relationship with alcohol, whether that means abstaining, taking a break, or simply understanding how to have a healthy relationship with alcohol.

About Daybreak

Daybreak is an online program that helps people change their relationship with alcohol through a supportive community, habit-change experiments, and one-on-one chats with health coaches. Since 2016, *Daybreak* has been available across the PHN (Primary Healthcare Network).. More than 5,000 clients remain active in the program each month.

About VicHealth

VicHealth is a pioneer in health promotion. We work with partners to discover, implement and share solutions to the health problems facing Victorians. We seek a Victoria where everyone enjoys better health and wellbeing.

VicHealth is the champion of health for all Victorians. We work to keep people healthy, happy and well – preventing chronic disease and keeping people out of the medical system.