

MEDIA RELEASE**Alcohol companies keep Australians in the dark about health risks**

Alcohol companies are more than twice as likely to tell consumers to “Drink responsibly” than to warn them why, according to [new research published today](#).

Public health experts say the findings demonstrate why the Australian Government should follow the lead of countries such as the UK and Ireland that have committed to introducing mandatory alcohol health warning labels to help consumers make informed choices.

The study, led by The George Institute for Global Health and published today in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, analysed over 6,000 alcohol labels across three major retailers, analysing the type and location of voluntary health warnings and messages.

It follows the release of the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Disability’s report on the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia last week, which recommended a mandatory regulatory framework for alcohol advertising and marketing, and new initiatives to provide more guidance to parents about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

The authors found that only 25% of products carried a voluntary warning and almost all of these (99%) focused on advising specific groups not to drink, including minors, pregnant women or drivers.

They also discovered 65% of products included responsible consumption messages, without giving any details of the health harms – such as alcohol being a risk factor for at least seven types of cancer, or that it causes liver disease.

When a voluntary health warning or message was included, it was almost always hidden from view on the back or bottom of the pack.

Lead author Asad Yusoff, from The George Institute for Global Health, says the findings demonstrate how current lax alcohol label rules allow companies to obscure the facts about alcohol and health.

“Our study reveals that alcohol companies are using weak voluntary health messaging and labels to feign corporate responsibility, while keeping consumers in the dark about the real health harms of drinking.

“Worldwide, alcohol causes around 2.6 million deaths each year. It’s associated with a wide range of health harms – including injuries, poor mental health, obesity and cancer. The World Health Organization states that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption, but people in Australia aren’t seeing that information on alcohol packaging.

“Instead the alcohol industry is using vague, largely hidden, responsible drinking messages that don’t inform consumers of the risks of even low levels of alcohol use,” said Mr Yusoff.

Senior author Professor Simone Pettigrew from The George Institute for Global Health added that research from her team has examined how vague responsible drinking messages can delay government action by appearing proactive, while actually failing to provide important information.

“Many Australians might be surprised to learn that “Drink responsibly” messages have been developed by industry-run bodies, like DrinkWise, rather than independent health experts, and our previous research shows they are ineffective.”

Terry Slevin, CEO, Public Health Association of Australia says that alcohol continues to go under the radar as a real and potent public health risk and government action is needed.

“One of the challenges is that the alcohol industry is large and active – they have repeatedly lobbied against mandated health warnings on alcohol products.

“This study shows that the current situation is alarming, with current voluntary alcohol warnings largely hidden, uninformative and ineffective.

“The UK’s recent 10-year health plan included a commitment to introduce alcohol health warnings, while Ireland will make them mandatory from 2028. It’s time for the Australian Government and its agencies to follow in their footsteps and take action to put Australians’ health above alcohol industry profits.”

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For media enquiries and interviews please contact Hollie Harwood, 0400 762 010, hharwood@phaa.net.au

“Are consumers warned of the risks? An audit of voluntary health-related information on alcohol labels in Australia” will be published in *the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* on 23 September 2026 [here](#).

The [*Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*](#) is the official publication of the Public Health Association of Australia.

It is an open access journal, committed to publishing scientifically rigorous, high-quality peer-reviewed public health research.

Please credit the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* as the publication source of the research.