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## **Big spike in emergency department admissions over Xmas-New Year**

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, has urged party-goers to drink responsibly this coming holiday season following an alarming increase in the number of alcohol-related emergency department admissions for the Xmas-New Year period.

Mr Della Bosca said a sample of 44 emergency departments, covering two thirds of the State, revealed a jump of almost 58 per cent since 2004 in the number of people being treated for alcohol-related incidents between mid-December and mid-January.

“The rise in alcohol-related admissions for New Years’ Day is even worse - up 184 per cent,” the Minister said.

“These figures have been growing steadily over the past five years indicating more and more dangerous levels of drinking behaviour in the community.

“A responsible attitude to alcohol consumption this holiday season will help take pressure off our hard-working emergency department doctors and nurses who have had a challenging year,” Mr Della Bosca said.

### **Emergency Department alcohol-related diagnosis on New Year’s Day:**

<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
76	92	84	103	140

### **Emergency Department alcohol-related diagnosis (18 December– 14 January):**

<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
568	698	711	885	897

“About 37 per cent of males and 27 per cent of females report engaging in risk drinking behaviours at some time of the year, but this data demonstrates we are approaching a particularly dangerous period,” the Minister said.

“The Garling Report into NSW acute care services advises a focus on prevention when it comes to the health and well-being of our young people and I am pursuing these type of strategies – including a restriction of alcohol advertising – to tackle this issue.

“Prevention will play a vital role in improving patient care and form an important part of our future initiatives to support our hard-working doctors and nurses.

“As well as preventative measures, we have a range of initiatives in place based on intervention, treatment, policing and trading restrictions,” Mr Della Bosca said.

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“These initiatives include dedicated youth alcohol prevention programs, State-wide alcohol education campaigns, treatment and support services, school-based drug and alcohol counselling and sports-based programs with positive role models,” the Minister said.

“There are also court-based treatment programs to help young people whose offending is related to alcohol misuse and police programs to reduce violence and anti-social behaviour.

“The growing problem of alcohol abuse cannot be fixed by governments alone – it will require a community-wide effort and close partnerships with non-government organisations.

“The Australian Alcohol Guidelines recommend that on average, men should not consume more than four standard drinks a day and woman no more than two,” Mr Della Bosca said.

There are a number of tips people should remember to stay safe when celebrating:

- Pace yourself and sip drinks, do not scull.
- Don't mix drinks.
- Drink alternatives to alcohol such as soft drinks, juices and water.
- Drink a glass of water between each alcoholic drink.
- Avoid salty foods and nibbles such as peanuts and pretzels – they make you thirsty.
- Eat a full meal when celebrating.
- Avoid getting into “rounds” and “shouts”.
- Don't top up people's drinks.
- Designate a driver before having a drink.
- Always carry enough money for a taxi or a phone call.

“Obviously, while we do not want to stop people from celebrating, we are urging them to plan ahead and drink responsibly for their own benefit and that of our hard-working doctors and nurses,” the Minister added.

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