



John Della Bosca MLC
Minister for Health
Minister for the Central Coast
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

**** EMBARGO until 5.30am 23 December 2008 ****

Limit your drinks and leave the car keys at home

NSW Minister for Health John Della Bosca today urged people not to drink drive or binge drink over the festive season.

Mr Della Bosca said 30 per cent of all fatal drink driving crashes occur between 9pm and 9am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights – traditional party nights – and this year's Christmas/Boxing Day weekend.

He said drink driving contributed to about 18 per cent of all fatal road crashes but this is likely to be much higher during the festive season.

"Typically, over the Christmas-New Year period we see an increase in the number of fatal crashes where alcohol is the major cause," Mr Della Bosca said.

"While we are not calling for an end to celebrations, we are urging people to think ahead, leave the car in the garage and place a limit on the amount they drink.

"There's good reason why it is called the 'silly season'."

Mr Della Bosca said around 40 per cent of males and 30 per cent of females report engaging in risk drinking behaviours at any time of the year.

"Young men aged between 16 and 24 years are the worst offenders with nearly 50 per cent of those engaging in risk drinking behaviour," Mr Della Bosca said.

"In addition to accidents on the road, people who drive irresponsibly and those who take drugs are also at far greater risk of drowning, violence and family breakdowns.

"These events can have devastating effects on individuals and families and are entirely preventable."

Mr Della Bosca said the statistics were frightening:

- About one person aged under 25 dies due to alcohol related injuries in NSW in an average week
- On average, one in four hospitalisations of people aged 15-24 in NSW happens because of alcohol
- More than 20 people under 25 will be hospitalised due to alcohol-caused assault in NSW in an average week
- One in two people aged 15-17 who get drunk will do something they regret

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.

On any single day, men should consume no more than six drinks and women no more than four. At least one day a week should be alcohol free.

Mr Della Bosca said there are a number of tips people should remember to stay safe:

- 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

If you are planning to host a party, Mr Della Bosca also urges to keep the safety of your guests in mind:

- Provide food and alcohol and non-alcoholic and be sure to replenish these regularly
- Do not serve alcohol to young people less than 18 years of age
- Do not let anyone drive who is under the influence of alcohol