



## **MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED AND NOT FOR USE PRIOR TO MONDAY NOVEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2011**

### **New research being released by The Salvation Army highlights the links between alcohol and mental health.**

New Roy Morgan research being released today by The Salvation Army as part of its annual alcohol awareness campaign will show 15.1 million people aged 14 plus (81%) consider that drinking alcohol can worsen a person's mental health.

The research also reveals that 1.8 million people aged 14 plus (10%) say they sometimes drink alcohol as a way of dealing with feeling down or anxious. The Salvation Army says this is of clear concern. The research also reveals 3.9 million people aged 14 plus (21%) say they sometimes end up drinking more alcohol than they had planned to.

The 2011 campaign seeks to stimulate debate in the community about alcohol habits. This year's alcohol awareness campaign focuses on the links between alcohol misuse and mental health.

The Roy Morgan research was a telephone survey of a random national sample of 638 Australians aged 14 and over about alcohol consumption and attitudes with a particular focus on mental health.

The Salvos say they are encouraging all Australians to review their use of alcohol and make it a topic of conversation amongst family and friends.

The research also reveals that approximately 2 million Australians (aged 14 plus) say drinking alcohol does not affect a person's mental health (10%) and approximately 595,000 people (aged 14 plus) say drinking alcohol can improve a person's mental health (3%).

Amongst the key findings of the new Roy Morgan research are:

- 15.1 million people (81%) say drinking alcohol can worsen a person's mental health.
- 1.8 million people (10%) say they sometimes drink alcohol as a way of dealing with feeling down or anxious.

- 3.9 million people (21%) say they sometimes end up drinking more alcohol than they planned to.
- 1.3 million people (7%) say they sometimes feel down or anxious the day after they have drunk a lot of alcohol.

The research also highlights that huge numbers of Australians aged 14 and over associate drinking large amounts of alcohol with a variety of mental health issues. 14.1 million (76%) say as far as they are aware, drinking a large amount of alcohol can be associated with major depressive orders. Approximately 12.7 million (68%) say as far as they are aware, drinking a large amount of alcohol can be associated with anxiety disorders.

Approximately 10.2 million (55%) say as far as they are aware, drinking a large amount of alcohol can be associated with bi-polar depression and 11.2 million (60%) say as far as they are aware, drinking a large amount of alcohol can be associated with social phobias.

Major Glenn Whittaker said, “This new research clearly shows many people consider drinking alcohol can worsen a person’s health. A huge amount of work has gone into community education on this topic and clearly some of the messages are getting through. We are becoming more informed and more aware. But there is much to be done yet. We have been highlighting concerns about alcohol issues for many years.”

“The vast majority of Australians use alcohol responsibly. We need more debate about alcohol in our community. All too often we are seeing the damage alcohol is doing to people and families. It is alarming and deeply concerning. We see huge numbers of people who have anxiety disorders, depression, schizophrenia and bi-polar disorders. Too often this is linked to alcohol issues.”

“Without question a portion of Australians misuse alcohol or have issues with mental health. We want to raise awareness within the community that these two problems are too often linked. Alcohol misuse and mental illness are linked. They do impact on one another. It is predicted that by 2020 depression will be one of the world’s largest health problems.”

Gerard Byrne from The Salvation Army said, “We strongly encourage people to think about and talk about alcohol issues among their family and friends, and find ways so they can look out for each other when life is not a bed of roses. We encourage people to engage in healthy ways of dealing with difficult emotions and to avoid using alcohol for this purpose.”

“This new research is concerning and worrying. To see that approximately 3.9 million (21%) people in the Roy Morgan research (1 in 5) say they sometimes end up drinking more alcohol than they planned to is troubling. We are alarmed about this because we know – amongst other things – this can affect their mental health.”

“We are certainly pleased to see a large group of Australians are clearly aware of the link between alcohol consumption and mental health problems. There needs to be more awareness. However, there are certainly too many people saying they sometimes drink alcohol as a way of dealing with feeling down or anxious. There are a lot of people who are not aware that alcohol consumption and mental health are related and that’s troubling.”

“Alcohol abuse is strongly associated with anxiety disorders, social phobias, bi-polar depression and schizophrenia. The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing has shown this. It is absolutely true to say that alcohol dependence increases the risk of mental health problems and that people with mental health problems are at increased risk of having alcohol related problems.”

“The 2007 national survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing found 3.2 million Australians had experienced mental disorders in the previous 12 months. The report estimated over 2.3 million people had anxiety disorders. It also highlighted 7.3 million people at some point in their lifetime had experienced either anxiety, mood or substance use disorders.”

Gerard Byrne added, “Often the effects of drink may remain unchecked until a serious addiction develops. We know that there are plenty of people out there that use alcohol to cope with anger, stress and sometimes sleeplessness. It does not help and it is not going to.”

“We are aware that there’s quite a lot of self medicating out there. People do use alcohol to deal with problems. The reality is it makes them worse and can put you at risk of dependence.”

“It’s most concerning that many Australians are aware of the links between mental health issues and alcohol and yet there are a significant number of people out there drinking at risky levels. The national guidelines indicate people should not have more than 2 standard drinks a day.”

“We highlight that if people think they are having problems or issues, see your GP. Reach out. Treatment works. Help is out there. Contact your local Salvation Army or [salvationarmy.org.au](http://salvationarmy.org.au).”

“It’s vital people incorporate exercise into their life and follow a sensible diet. Obviously joining social groups and reconnecting with old friends is going to help. If you have a serious concern, counsellors can assist. Ignoring issues around depression and anxiety can never be a good thing.”

The Salvation Army’s website will have more information, just go to [www.salvationarmy.org.au](http://www.salvationarmy.org.au).

**Media enquiries to: Media Key on 03 9769 6488**

## **EMBARGOED INFORMATION – NOT FOR USE PRIOR TO MONDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2011**

### **The new Roy Morgan research at a glance:**

Roy Morgan Research has recently conducted a telephone survey of a national random sample of 638 Australians aged 14 and over, about alcohol consumption and attitudes, with a particular focus on mental health. The survey was conducted as part of Roy Morgan Research's regular telephone omnibus survey, CATIBus, and was commissioned by the Salvation Army. The following is a brief summary of some of the main findings.

#### **Perceptions of the effect of alcohol consumption on mental health**

- 81% of Australians 14 and over consider that drinking alcohol can worsen a person's mental health. (This 81% represents approximately 15.1 million people.)
- 3% of Australians 14+ consider that drinking alcohol CAN improve a person's mental health (representing approximately 595,000 people)
- 10% of Australians think that drinking alcohol does not affect a person's mental health (approximately 2 million)
- Of Australians 14 and over, 17% (about 3.2 million people) believe that an adult can drink more than 2 standard drinks every day for many years without adversely affecting their mental health.
- 8% of Australians 14 and over believe that any drinking would adversely affect mental health (1.5 mil)
- 68% of Australians aged 14 and over say that as far as they are aware, drinking large amounts of alcohol can be associated with anxiety disorders (12.7 mil).
- 55% say that as far as they are aware, drinking large amounts of alcohol can be associated with bipolar depression (10.2 mil)
- 76% say that as far as they are aware, drinking large amounts of alcohol can be associated with major depressive disorders (14.1 mil)
- 60% say that as far as they are aware, drinking large amounts of alcohol can be associated with social phobias (11.2 mil)
- 43% say that as far as they are aware, drinking large amounts of alcohol can be associated with schizophrenia (8 mil)

## **How alcohol affects how people feel**

- 10% of Australians 14 and over say that they sometimes drink alcohol as a way of dealing with feeling down or anxious (1.8 mil).
- 7% of Australians 14 and over say that they sometimes feel down or anxious the day after they have drunk a lot of alcohol (1.3 mil)
- 12% of Australians 14 and over say that they sometimes feel content the day after drinking a lot of alcohol (2.3 mil)
- 21% of Australians 14 and over say that they sometimes end up drinking more alcohol than they had planned to (3.9 mil)
- 7% of Australians 14 and over say that sometimes when they drink a lot of alcohol they feel unhappy afterwards (1.2 mil)
- 14% of Australians 14 and over say sometimes when they drink a lot of alcohol they then feel unconcerned (2.6 mil)