

National Liquor News - September 2011

National Household Survey shows more good news on how Australians are drinking

The Australian Government recently released the latest nationwide household survey of how Australians are drinking, and it contained a lot of good news for Australia.

These surveys are conducted every three years and are very large – more than 26,000 people. So the household surveys are about the best source of reliable information we have on how Australians drink. It's important because everyone thinks they know just how badly other people are drinking (because journalists and politicians have told them so) but until a proper survey is done, that's all anecdotal.

The best news was that there are some sharp declines in the number of underage Australians who are drinking. That trend has been evident for most of this decade, but I believe that DrinkWise Australia can take a lot of credit for this, because there was another sharp drop amongst all the data – in the number of parents supplying alcohol to their children. Parents have been the target of DrinkWise's ongoing campaigns, and the ALSA campaign "*Don't buy it for them*" should also be given some credit. Unfortunately, the proportion who are drinking in a risky or high risk way did not decline as much, so there is more to be done by targeting that group.

There was also a small but statistically significant decline in the proportion of all drinkers who have consumed at risky levels for short term risk in the past year. This proportion is still too high at a little below 40%, but the trend is in the right direction.

More good news was that the proportion of pregnant women abstaining from drinking alcohol increased in 2010 (from 40.0% in 2007 to 52.0% in 2010). That is a huge improvement.

Finally, fewer Australians are drinking and driving than in 2007, (14.3% down to 13.1%), which does not look a lot but that is a little over 8% fewer drinking drivers in three years.

I might be criticised for highlighting small improvements, but at least they are based on sound research when so much alcohol commentary is not.