

24 January 2025

House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
By email: [Health.Reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:Health.Reps@aph.gov.au)

**Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia- new report released.**

Dear House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport,

We write to draw attention to the recent release of a US Surgeon General's Advisory on alcohol and cancer risk, which we believe should be considered by the Committee as part of the Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia. We acknowledge that the period for submissions has now closed, however recommend that this new report be considered by the Committee during the ongoing work of the inquiry.

On 3 January 2025, the US Surgeon General issued an Advisory on alcohol and cancer risk. The Advisory can be found here: <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/alcohol-cancer/index.html>. The Advisory reveals that alcohol use is the third leading preventable cause of cancer in the US.<sup>i</sup> The document calls for action to address this significant and urgent public health issue. The report highlights that alcohol increases the risk of at least 7 types of cancer and provides evidence on how alcohol causes cancer.

The Advisory outlines how awareness of alcohol as a cancer risk factor is low amongst the US population. This is similar to Australia where awareness that alcohol causes cancer is low. In our submission to the Inquiry, we included the results of a 2023 poll, led by Alcohol Change Australia, that found that less than half of Australians were aware alcohol causes cancer. The poll also revealed that only 14% of Australians were aware that alcohol can cause breast cancer.<sup>ii</sup>

The Advisory includes recommended actions that can be taken to reduce alcohol-related cancers. These include recommendations to update the existing Surgeon General's health warning label on alcohol products to include a warning about cancer risk and further actions, such as expanding education efforts, to improve awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer. These recommendations should be considered by the Committee as part of the current Inquiry as they are also applicable to Australia, given Australia also experiences significant harm from alcohol, including cancer, and awareness of the harms remain low.

These recommendations are consistent with Alcohol Change Australia's submission to the current Inquiry. In our submission, Alcohol Change Australia recommended that the Government empower the community by raising awareness of the harms caused by alcohol by investing in education campaigns and introducing mandatory health warning labels on all alcohol products. Our submission provides further details about these recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration of this new report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact Natalie Stapleton, Executive Officer,

Yours faithfully,

Dr Erin Lalor AM  
Chair, Alcohol Change Australia

Natalie Stapleton  
Executive Officer, Alcohol Change Australia

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<sup>i</sup> US Surgeon General Advisory. Alcohol and Cancer Risk. 2025. Available from: <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/alcohol-cancer/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Alcohol Change Australia. Public opinion on alcohol in Australia: Knowledge, attitudes, and support for change. November 2023. Available from: <https://alcoholchangeaus.org.au/public-opinion-on-alcohol-in-australia/>