

MEDIA RELEASE

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New research reveals more than 8.6 million Australians would be misled by sugar and carbohydrate claims on alcohol products, prompting urgent call to action from top health groups.

More than 8.6 million Australians aged 18–65 would be misled by sugar and carbohydrate claims – such as ‘low carb’ and ‘low sugar’ – on alcohol products, thinking these claims mean these products are healthier and better for them, according to [new research](#) from Cancer Council Victoria’s Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer.

Leading public health groups including Alcohol Change Australia and Cancer Council are deeply concerned by the potential impact of these claims on the health of Australians, as alcohol is a Group 1 carcinogen that causes cancer and over 200 other health issues.

[An open letter](#) from peak public health and consumer bodies to Food Ministers is urging Ministers to intervene and request a review of a recent decision by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). This decision will allow the alcohol industry to use both sugar and carbohydrate claims on alcoholic beverage labels and in advertising.

Other research into the prevalence of these claims shows that between 2013 and 2023, nearly 1 in 3 (32.5%) new alcohol products featured a health-oriented or nutrition claim, such as ‘no added sugar’ or ‘low carb’ – an increase of 13% over the decade. These claims are sometimes advertised using slogans like “No carbs. No Sugar. No guilt.”

Lead researcher, Dr Ashleigh Haynes, from Cancer Council Victoria’s Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer said these claims pose risk to Australians’ health.

“Research shows that ‘low carb’ and ‘low sugar’ marketing claims are powerful and can give alcohol a ‘health halo’, meaning Australians perceive these products as healthier, less harmful products compared to products that don’t carry these claims. The new evidence reinforces the misleading nature of these claims, as millions of Australians would perceive these products to be better for them.”

“But the reality is that there is no such thing as a healthy alcohol product because alcohol is a major driver of disease and increases the risk of seven different types of cancer.”

Natalie Stapleton, Executive Officer of Alcohol Change Australia, added that the FSANZ decision does not sufficiently prioritise public health.

“The health and wellbeing of Australians and New Zealanders must come before the profits of the multi-billion-dollar alcohol industry. We urge Food Ministers to request a review of this decision and ensure Australians are not misled about the healthiness of alcohol products.”

Ms Stapleton said that allowing the alcohol industry to use sugar and carbohydrate claims on alcoholic beverage labels and in advertising may undermine important measures to reduce alcohol related harms.

“Australian Government guidelines recommend that people reduce alcohol use to reduce their risk of serious harms from alcohol —claims like ‘low sugar’ and ‘low carb’, which are used to market and promote these products, risk undermining this message.”

Clare Hughes, Chair of Cancer Council’s National Nutrition, Alcohol and Physical Activity Committee, said that when it comes to alcohol, people deserve honest product labels to make informed purchasing decisions for their health.

“Alcohol in any amount is harmful to health; even small amounts increase the risk of cancer, with 5,800 of all new cancer cases due to alcohol in 2020. If governments don’t take action, alcohol companies will continue to market alcohol products as a healthy purchase and distract consumers from the health harms of alcohol use.”

-ENDS-

Contact details:

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact:

Cancer Council Australia, media@cancer.org.au

02 8256 4109 (redirects to mobile outside of business hours)

About Alcohol Change Australia:

Alcohol Change Australia is a coalition of health and community organisations working together to prevent and reduce harm from alcohol among Australian individuals, families, and communities.

Find out more at <https://alcoholchangeaus.org.au/> or visit our [LinkedIn](#) or [Bluesky](#).

About Cancer Council Australia:

Cancer Council Australia is Australia’s leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

Find out more at cancer.org.au, or visit our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#)