

## Media Release

12 September 2021

### **New study finds alcohol companies trying to fool consumers with ‘better-for-you’ marketing tactics**

Cancer Council is warning consumers not to be fooled by alcohol companies who promote their products as better-for-you, after a [study](#) examining the nutrient profile of new alcoholic products marketed as ‘healthy’ found that 85 per cent had full-strength alcohol content, and more than a third didn’t have any nutritional information available.

Julia Stafford, Chair of the Cancer Council Alcohol Working Group, said promoting alcohol as ‘healthy’ or ‘better-for-you’ was a devious marketing tactic by alcohol companies who know that Aussies are now focussing more on their health and wellbeing.

“We are seeing an emerging and very concerning trend of alcohol companies trying to create a health halo around products that are fundamentally unhealthy, by marketing them as lower in calories, sugar or carbohydrates, using “natural” ingredients or avoiding the use of artificial additives or flavours,” Ms Stafford said.

“Alcoholic products promoted as better-for-you rely on an illusion of healthiness, without addressing the ingredient of most concern to health, the alcohol content.

“Alcohol is a cause of seven types of cancer, including bowel cancer and breast cancer (in women), and is linked to more than 200 diseases.

“Focussing on minor differences in sugar and kilojoule content from other alcohol products is nothing more than a distraction from the much bigger issue of the health risks of alcohol itself.”

Co-author and Accredited Practising Dietitian, Gael Myers, said the study looked at 144 new alcohol products released in Australia between 2019 and 2020 that were promoted as better-for-you.

“Of the 144 supposedly better-for-you products we analysed, only around one third of the products had complete nutrient information (energy, carbohydrate, sugar, and alcohol content) available, one third had partial nutrient information and a third had only the alcohol content,” Ms Myers said.

“People who drink have a right to know what’s in the alcohol products they purchase.

“Many people aren’t aware that it’s the alcohol in alcoholic products that contributes a lot of the kilojoules.”

Ms Stafford said that energy and nutrition information on alcoholic product packages would help people who drink alcohol make more informed decisions.

“We’d like to see energy labelling displayed on all alcoholic product packaging,” Ms Stafford said.

“Strengthened marketing rules are also needed to stop alcohol companies using health-related claims to give products a health halo.

“The alcohol and advertising industries have designed their own marketing codes, and these codes are too narrow and too weak to restrict claims about healthiness in alcohol ads.

“We call on the Australian Government to introduce comprehensive, independent controls on alcohol marketing, which include restrictions on the use of health-related messaging.”

ENDS

**Examples of ‘better-for-you’ marketing claims from the products analysed in the research:**

- “We want our products to tick the health boxes”
- “The millennial focussed brand is health conscious and environmentally friendly”
- “Using the best 100% natural ingredients we can find”
- “Cleaner beverages”
- “All natural ingredients, low sugar, gluten free”
- “Perfect drink of choice for those who are seeking to live a healthy and balanced lifestyle”
- “Guilt-free G&T”
- “Tasty, healthy alternative premix options”
- “Zero sugar, zero carbs”
- “Contains absolutely zero sugar, no sweeteners and nothing artificial”

**Cancer Council 13 11 20**

To find out more about alcohol and cancer visit:

<https://www.cancerwa.asn.au/prevention/alcohol/>

**[Health halo or genuine product development: Are better-for-you alcohol products actually healthier?](#)**

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See Cancer Council’s [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

**Available for interviews:**

Julia Stafford, Chair, Cancer Council Alcohol Working Group