

21 January 2008

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **WFA submission criticises NHMRC draft revised Alcohol Guidelines**

Substantial changes to proposed drinking guidelines have been criticised by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA), citing insufficient evidence and questionable process.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) published a draft revision of its Alcohol Guidelines for public consultation in October 2007. The WFA, together with representatives of all sectors involved in the production and sale of alcohol in Australia, has developed a comprehensive submission on the draft revised guidelines.

WFA Chief Executive, Stephen Strachan, said, "The Australian wine sector supported and actively promoted the 2001 NHMRC Australian Alcohol Guidelines, and also supports the periodic review of this important document."

The existing Guidelines recommend 2 standard drinks per day for women and 4 for men. This difference takes into account gender differences in the distribution and elimination of alcohol in the human body, and gender differences in the biological effects of alcohol on the human body.

Strachan said, "The draft revised Guidelines do not take physiological and biological differences into account and recommend an upper limit of 2 standard drinks per day for both men and women. There is insufficient scientific evidence to support this change."

"Furthermore, the draft revised Guidelines ignore benefits associated with moderate alcohol consumption," continued Strachan. "The weight of accumulated medical evidence in support of benefits associated with moderate consumption is overwhelming, and any omission of these factors is a glaring inadequacy in the revised draft Guidelines."

"The combined impact of this omission and the dramatic reduction in the daily recommendation will simply leave consumers confused and distrustful."

"Any new guidelines should be based on the most recent and relevant medical and scientific thinking," he continued. "Continuity and consistency is critical to public health messages if they are to be in any way effective, so unless there is strong evidence to support a change, the current Alcohol Guidelines should be maintained,"

"We believe that the existing 2001 Guidelines are more relevant to tackling problems associated with the population's current drinking habits, and are supported by a more thorough examination of relevant scientific literature."

The NHMRC is considering all submissions and is expected to publish final Guidelines in March or April 2008.

**For further information, including a fact sheet or a copy of the Submission, contact:**

Penny Boothman  
Communications & Membership Director  
Winemakers' Federation of Australia  
08 8222 9255 / 0419 833107 / [penny@wfa.org.au](mailto:penny@wfa.org.au)