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The science of wine and health

Can wine be good for you? The scientists are about to have their say.

Over the next two days, 27 specialists from 10 countries will present research findings that should inform Australia's policy discussions around wine and health when Sydney hosts the seventh international WineHealth conference.

Their expertise covers fields as diverse as cardiovascular health, pharmacology, ageing, cognitive function, nutrition and lifestyle, and psychology.

"All the research tells us that excessive alcohol consumption is bad for us – that is a given," said the Chief Executive of the Winemakers' Federation of Australia, Paul Evans.

"Unfortunately, as Australia debates how to deal with health and social issues around alcohol abuse, we are now hearing claims from some lobby groups that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption. Science says otherwise.

"This panel of experts will present a number of studies that contribute to the growing body of research work linking moderate wine consumption with a healthy lifestyle."

The conference will hear reports on

- Ongoing research into the so-called J-curve, which shows that while the risk of cardiovascular and other diseases is high for heavy drinkers, it is lower for moderate drinkers than for non-drinkers
- A seven-year study of American women that revealed a similar link between moderate consumption and lower cardiovascular risk
- A detailed Australian study showing alcohol intake in the low to moderate range appears to offer protection against the onset of dementia.

"No-one is suggesting that people should start drinking to gain health benefits," Mr Evans said.

"But the millions of Australians who choose to drink wine in moderation, and those who make the rules and fund the programs that affect them, need to have all the facts."

WineHealth 2013 will be held at the **Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre** tomorrow and Friday (**18 and 19 July**). More information and the full program are available at www.winehealth.com.au.

Interviews with speakers can be arranged through the conference media coordinator, Rae Blair, on 0417 810 737.

Interviews with Paul Evans can be arranged through Rae or through Nick Carne at WFA on 0404 850 859.

The previous WineHealth scientific meetings were held in Udine (Italy) in 1996, at the New York Academy of Science Meeting in California (USA) in 2001, in Santiago (Chile) in 2002, Stellenbosch (South Africa) in 2005, Bordeaux (France) in 2007 and Friuli (Italy) in 2010.