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# Call for alcohol education

## HEALTH

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### Region

ALCOHOL causes more issues in communities than illicit drugs, a new report has found.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education has released its annual study, which examined Australians' attitudes towards alcohol, their consumption behaviours and awareness and experiences of alcohol harm. The survey found that ma-

jority of Australians believed the country had a problem with alcohol, however perceptions about the risks of alcohol abuse were poor, with fewer than half of respondents believing there are links between alcohol misuse and stroke, mouth and throat cancer, and breast cancer.

Wimmera Drug Action Taskforce co-ordinator Sally Pymmer said alcohol was the biggest issue in the region.

"More counselling clients are seen for alcohol problems than for any other drug

issue in this region," she said. Ms Pymmer said alcohol abuse caused a range of both short-term and long-term problems.

"There is no safe level of alcohol consumption - it's toxic to your body," she said. "Alcohol consumption can include risk of injury, violence and absenteeism from work."

Ms Pymmer said alcohol abuse could also cause problems with families, the law and employment.

"Injuries and violence

can place more pressure on emergency services and take resources away from where they might be more needed," she said.

"Absenteeism from work due to hangovers can occur and even when attending work with a hangover, productivity can be reduced.

"There is also the financial cost of consuming alcohol, which can place more pressure on struggling families."

Ms Pymmer said alcohol was also a contributing factor towards a number of health

problems including cancers of the throat and breast along with heart, liver and brain problems.

"People who regularly consume alcohol can become dependent on it and need to drink it to feel normal," she said. "If people are consuming alcohol to cope with life's problems they might also need to drink increasingly more to get the same effect, which increases the chances of health problems in the future."

Ms Pymmer said more need-

ed to be done to change people's views about alcohol.

"Alcohol is seen as normal in the community and there seems to be a common belief that everyone drinks," she said.

"Most people know someone who has consumed alcohol for a number of years and don't appear to have had any detrimental effects.

"People getting cancer, having health problems, financial or family problems might not associate this with alcohol consumption."