

## **National Binge Drinking Campaign**

Many young Australians are drinking to excess, placing themselves at risk of short and long-term harm. After tobacco, alcohol is the second biggest contributor to drug-related problems in Australia. As well as affecting the individual, risky drinking behaviour has a significant impact on our community. The latest estimates of alcohol-related harm show that it causes around 3,200 deaths and 81,000 hospitalisations every year.<sup>1</sup> The annual cost to the Australian community of alcohol-related social problems was estimated at \$15.3 billion in 2004-05.<sup>2</sup>

The Australian Government's National Binge Drinking Strategy aims to address the problem of alcohol misuse among young Australians. The campaign focuses on raising awareness of the short and long-term impacts of 'risky' drinking among young people, and over time, contributing to the development of a more responsible drinking culture within Australian society.

### **WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CAMPAIGN?**

The campaign's objective is to increase the likelihood that if teenagers and young adults choose to drink alcohol, they don't drink to levels of intoxication that may result in harm to themselves or others.

### **SOME FACTS ABOUT THE PREVALENCE OF TEENAGE DRINKING:**

- About 40% of 14-19 year olds report drinking alcohol at levels that risk harm in the short term<sup>3</sup>
- By age 14, about 86% of students have tried alcohol<sup>4</sup>
- By age 17, 70% of students had consumed alcohol in the month prior to the survey<sup>4</sup>

### **SOME FACTS ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF TEENAGE DRINKING:**

- On average, 1 in 4 hospitalisations of 15-25 year-olds happen because of alcohol<sup>5</sup>
- 70 Australians aged under 25 will be hospitalised due to alcohol-caused assault in an average week<sup>5</sup>
- Four Australians aged under 25 die due to alcohol-related injuries in an average week<sup>5</sup>
- 1 in 2 Australians aged 15-17 who get drunk will do something they regret<sup>6</sup>

### **WHO IS THE CAMPAIGN AIMED AT?**

There are two primary target audiences for the campaign:

- Teenagers aged 15-17 years. These teenagers are at a critical age where they are likely to be initiated into drinking and exposed to both peer drinking and drinking amongst young adults.
- Young adults aged 18-25 years. This age group is more likely than any other to drink greater quantities of alcohol and to consume alcohol more frequently, placing themselves and others at greater risk of harm.

The secondary audience for the campaign is:

- Parents of 13-17 year-olds. Research among teenagers suggested that they are looking to their parents to provide guidance and boundaries of acceptable behaviour with respect to drinking alcohol, even if they do occasionally challenge and overstep these boundaries.<sup>7</sup>

For more information on the campaign visit [www.australia.gov.au/drinkingnightmare](http://www.australia.gov.au/drinkingnightmare)

## ***DON'T TURN A NIGHT OUT INTO A NIGHTMARE SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN***

The Government's \$20 million two year social marketing campaign confronts young people with the costs and consequences of binge drinking. The theme of the campaign is "Don't turn a night out into a nightmare", and demonstrates the violence, injury and humiliation that can result from binge-drinking. The campaign shows how a night out, which is full of positive expectations, can go horribly wrong.

## ***DON'T TURN A NIGHT OUT INTO A NIGHTMARE DIGITAL GAME***

The *Don't turn a night out into a nightmare* digital game extends the campaign theme of a typical night out that has the potential to go wrong. The game is informative, fun, user-friendly and utilises digital technology to encourage young people to think about the repercussions of binge drinking.

Players can negotiate their way through a typical Saturday night party and make important decisions about their drinking along the way. As their night evolves they will experience the direct consequences of their decisions. The game presents players with a variety of situations where alcohol, peer pressure and unacceptable behaviour can have dangerous social and physical consequences unless responsible decisions are made.

Throughout the game the players are presented with a series of statistics on binge drinking as well as tips to avoid turning their night out into a nightmare.

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## **Classroom activities**

**KEY LEARNING AREA:** Health and Physical Education

**YEAR LEVELS:** Years 9 and 10

The Department of Health and Ageing has partnered with the Inspire Foundation's Reach Out Teachers Network to produce this classroom resource kit.

The kit provides Teachers Network members with the game on CD-ROM to use as a classroom tool to promote discussion around the issue of binge drinking.

Also included in the kit are a range of fact sheets covering information on:

- Alcohol
- Binge drinking
- Helping a drunk friend
- Helping a friend with a drinking problem
- Managing peer pressure to drink
- Low risk drinking
- Drink spiking
- Safe partying
- Alcohol: What harm does it do?
- Alcohol and the law

The information below provides ideas for classroom activities to undertake alongside the game.

## Activity 1: Group Decision Making

Divide students into smaller groups to play the game and pause at each decision point to make a collective decision based on the scenario. As the 'night out' develops each decision will begin to impact on the activities and consequences of the evening.

### OBJECTIVE:

- To generate group discussion about the choices presented in the game and negotiate agreement within the group in order to make collective decisions.
- Students will also look at the short- and long-term consequences of their decisions.
- Students will need to use skills in problem solving and negotiation in order to make each decision.

### SCENARIO 1 – BEFORE THE PARTY

The questions presented relate to:

- Decisions about whether the player will drink alcohol during the evening
- If so, where they plan to obtain the alcohol
- Transportation for the evening (including bus, walking, driving)

### Discussion topics:

In negotiating these decisions students can discuss:

- Will they drink alcohol at all? Is it necessary to drink alcohol to enjoy the party? Is it assumed alcohol is involved? What are the reasons why someone would choose to drink or not drink alcohol? How will their decision impact on their enjoyment of the night?
- Obtaining alcohol – the legalities and consequences of under-age drinking
- Transport options and how they will affect the night

### SCENARIO 2 – PRE-DRINKS GATHERING

The questions presented relate to:

- How much and how quickly the player drinks alcohol
- Choosing other activities besides drinking alcohol (eg a game of pool)
- Transport options and how they will affect the night

### Discussion topics

In negotiating these decisions students can discuss:

- The importance of awareness of numbers of alcoholic drinks consumed and the time in which they are consumed
- Focussing on other activities besides drinking alcohol
- Getting in the car with a friend who is/has been drinking alcohol

## SCENARIO 3 – AT THE PARTY

The questions presented relate to:

- How much and how quickly the player drinks alcohol
- Consequences of being drunk – knocking over a lamp
- Choosing other activities besides drinking alcohol (eg karaoke)
- Using alcohol to 'fit in' and to 'loosen up'
- Drinking games and the consequences – being sick
- Alcohol and risk taking – dangerous situation on balcony railing / dancing on glass table – possible injury

### Discussion topics

In negotiating these decisions students can discuss:

- The importance of pacing and awareness of numbers of alcoholic drinks consumed
- Being drunk and looking foolish – breaking things, falling over, ruining your night – how the decisions earlier in the evening have led to this point
- Focussing on other activities besides drinking alcohol
- Alcohol and inhibitions – are we really more interesting after a few drinks? How would our friends judge us if we choose not to drink alcohol?
- The effects of binge drinking and drinking games – vomiting, blacking out
- Alcohol and injury – doing risky things when drunk

## MINI-GAME – THE CHAT

In this scenario the player and a character from the opposite sex have a conversation. The questions and responses result in either a positive outcome – the two become friends and aim to catch up again or a negative outcome - an uncomfortable situation the player may regret.

The player responds to the situation according to how much alcohol they have had to drink.

### Discussion topics:

In negotiating these responses students can discuss:

- The link between alcohol and sexual activity – particularly doing something you may regret
- Drinking and inhibitions – saying and doing things you might not normally do
- The dangers associated with being in a situation not in your control
- The regret and humiliation of doing something because you were drunk

## SCENARIO 4 – THE END OF THE NIGHT

The questions presented relate to:

- Knowing when to stop drinking alcohol
- Getting home and how this relates to your decision earlier in the evening

### Discussion topics

In negotiating these decisions students can discuss:

- Choosing the safest mode of transport home
- Getting in the car with a drunk friend
- When enough is enough

## MINI-GAME – THE EXIT

In this scenario the player needs to navigate their character from the front door of the house party through a constantly moving crowd to the curb without bumping into people. The player essentially has three “lives” where they get two free bumps but the third will result in an altercation.

The more alcohol the player has consumed during the game, the harder this task will be as the screen blurs and the player struggles to walk a straight line. If the player does end up in a fight, there will be no options available. The player is simply told they were involved in a fight, causing injury to themselves and further damage to friendships and respect.

### Discussion topics

In negotiating this game students can discuss:

- The impact their earlier decisions made on their current state
- The link between alcohol and violence

## SCENARIO 5 – THE AFTERMATH

At the end of the game, players will be presented with the consequences of their decisions depending on how much alcohol they have had to drink during the game.

A positive result will congratulate the player on having a fun night, keeping drinking under control and proving you don't have to drink excessively to have a good time. A negative result will have a range of implications from physical and emotional harms to trouble with the police and with friends or family.

The consequences are presented harshly to reinforce the point that simply by making responsible choices players can avoid a 'nightmare'. The player is given a final rating on their Respect-ometer and the game concludes, welcoming repeat plays to make better decisions the next time.

## Activity 2: Have your say

### Objective:

- To encourage classroom discussion on the issues relating to binge drinking/drinking to excess.
- To encourage students to use creativity, opinion and ideas to explore the issues in a wider context.

The topic of alcohol and binge drinking is one that has captured the attention of the media, governments and the community. It raises a number of issues that are relevant for young people to explore. This activity presents a range of topics that students can explore in a number of ways:

- **It's your choice:** Your decisions about drinking can result in either a fun night out or a total nightmare. What are the ways to keep your night fun, but in control?
- **Alcohol in society:** What is the role of alcohol in modern society? Is there too much focus on drinking? Does Australia have a harmful drinking culture?
- **Our drinking selves reflected:** How do film and television and the media in general contribute to our attitudes and behaviours towards drinking?
- **Empty pockets in the morning?** Apart from impacting our health and well-being, a big night out is not cheap. Are we making alcohol a priority for our finances in front of other important aspects of life?
- **Hitting the bottle... then hitting someone else:** Alcohol-related violence is a major issue with young people. Governments are tackling it in different ways. What are your ideas to curb the aggro?
- **Copping the flack:** There's a lot of focus on young people's binge drinking and some people view the situation as out of control. How does this make you feel? Do you agree that the problem needs to be addressed?
- **There's more to life!** What kind of activities do you enjoy that don't involve alcohol? What can local communities do to offer young people fun things to do on weekends?
- **Peer pressure:** How real is it? Why do some young people feel the need to pressure their friends into drinking? Why do others feel the need to go against their better judgement and drink just to fit in?
- **Playing the game:** Are alcohol and sport intrinsically linked? Playing sport is great for us for all kinds of reasons – physically, socially, emotionally – why do we so often follow it up with an excessive drinking session, which is so bad for us?
- **Off-your-face... then red-faced?** Our natural inhibitions are designed to keep us in check. Drinking reduces these inhibitions, which can lead to doing or saying things we might regret. It also makes us far more vulnerable to risks and bad decisions. Is it really worth it?

Some suggestions for incorporating these into the classroom:

### 1. CLASS DISCUSSION AND BRAINSTORM

Hold a general discussion on a number of the topics above and ask students to comment on each issue. Students should be encouraged to offer their own opinions and ideas.

Under each topic the class can brainstorm the main issues and the ideas they can come up with to address each one and write these on paper/whiteboard.

## 2. ROLE PLAYING

Divide students into groups and ask them to write and present a mini-play based on a social scenario. They can pick one or more of the topics above to address in the play. Following each presentation the class can discuss questions raised and ideas suggested.

## 3. 'THE PITCH'

Divide students into groups and ask them to come up with a creative ad that highlights the risks associated with binge drinking. The ad can be presented in a range of formats – for example a poster, a TV ad, an online viral campaign.

The objective is to convince the target market – young people – that binge drinking is definitely NOT a safe way to have fun.

The group can present their ad campaigns to the class and explain how they came up with the creative idea.

## 4. MEDIA ANALYSIS

Teachers should collect recent media reports about alcohol and binge-drinking, for example alcohol-related violence, young people and parties, drink driving, health impacts. Students can analyse the reports and discuss each one in relation to:

- The tone of the report
- The portrayal of young people
- The portrayal of alcohol – ie positive or negative
- The particular issues raised

## 5. REACH OUT FORUM

The Reach Out website will host a dedicated forum on the subject of binge drinking:

*Binge Drinking: It's enough to make you sick*

The forum will provide an opportunity for young people to discuss with other young people:

- issues relating to alcohol and binge drinking
- seek information on physical and emotional effects of alcohol
- seek advice on how to cope with peer pressure

The forum will not be an opportunity for individuals to relate their own experiences of binge drinking or those of their friends.

Students can be encouraged to extend the discussions they have in the classroom by contributing to the forum and discussing the issues with a wider community of young people.

The forum can be accessed by joining Reach Out at <http://au.reachout.com/connect/forums>

**DON'T TURN A  
NIGHT OUT  
INTO A  
NIGHTMARE**

# Teacher Notes

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2. Collins D., Lapsley H. (2008) The cost of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug abuse to Australian society in 2004/05. Commonwealth of Australia.
3. 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)
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reach out!  
TEACHERS' NETWORK