

Media Release

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AMBULANCES CALLED TO TREAT TWELVE DRUNK PATIENTS EACH DAY IN WA

New figures released by St John Ambulance show that over 4500 ambulances were called to treat alcohol intoxication in Western Australia last year.

A/Metropolitan Ambulance General Manager Angela Wright said ambulance calls for alcohol intoxication came in at an average of 12 per day during 2014 (4552 cases in 2014; 4383 cases in 2013).

“The continuation of such a large number of alcohol related call-outs is a concern,” she said.

“Despite the focus on education about the dangers of alcohol we are still seeing many cases of poor judgement. The repercussions of excessive drinking of alcohol can be life changing.”

“While some might have to spend a day or two in a hospital bed recovering from the effects of alcohol, other people end up in serious car crashes or succumb to physical violence and end up with severe injuries.”

She said St John was very supportive of programs and education that divert people away from alcohol and drugs.

The St John Ambulance WA state-wide call-out figures show that in 2014:

- Ambulances treated 4552 people for alcohol intoxication. This equates to 12 ambulances each day.
- 372 ambulance call-outs for alcohol intoxication were for people aged 18 years or younger, including 10 children aged under 12 years. This equates to more than one WA child or teenager a day treated for alcohol intoxication by an ambulance.
- 2709 patients (60%) who were treated for alcohol intoxication were taken to hospital.

Ms Julia Stafford, Executive Officer of the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth said: “These figures are alarming, even more so because they are just the tip of the iceberg. The figures do not include road crashes, assault injuries, falls or other situations where alcohol was involved.”

“Every day in WA an ambulance is called to treat a teenager because they are so blind drunk they need medical assistance. These numbers tell me that we have a big problem.”

“The burden of alcohol harms on ambulance and hospital services is hugely disappointing and entirely preventable. WA’s hard-working paramedics and hospital staff should not have to spend so much of their time dealing with drunk patients and the consequences of their drinking.”

“There is a clear need for urgent action by governments to make a real difference to the level of harm from alcohol in the community.”

“We hope that the State Government will accept the advice of its own independent advisory committee which reviewed the Liquor Control Act and strengthen police powers on alcohol sales to minors as well as other measures to protect young people such as curbing alcohol promotion.”

ENDS

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