

23 June 2021 Media Release (NZ)

## Don't be a blind drunk this JulEye

The Australian and New Zealand Eye Foundation (ANZEF) has recently launched its newest JulEye campaign, reminding all New Zealanders of the eye health risks associated with excessive drinking.

Alcohol is associated with more than one quarter of New Zealand's Emergency Department presentations every year, with eye injuries making up a portion of these, either through accidents, violence or forgetfulness.

Trainee ophthalmologist and JulEye spokesperson, Dr Simone Freundlich (*Froind-lich*), said she treats many of these patients with the most common injuries being trauma to the eyeball as well as eye socket fractures.

New Zealand Health Survey data from 2017/18<sup>1</sup> reveals 1 in 4 drinkers do so at hazardous levels, with men twice as likely as women to be hazardous drinkers and 2 in 5 youth being hazardous drinkers.

"There are well established connections between excessive drinking and anti-social behaviour, which can lead to black eyes, fractured eye sockets and permanent loss of vision," Dr Freundlich said.

"Worldwide, open-globe injuries, where the eyeball itself is damaged, are the leading cause of blindness— in the affected eye.

"In New Zealand, working class males are most likely to suffer such injuries<sup>2</sup>, with 23% of such injuries resulting from assault or alcohol use."

But it's not just excessive drinking that can cause damage to eyesight.

Fellow JulEye spokesperson, Dr Chameen Samarawickrama, wants you to consider how many times you have forgotten to remove your contact lenses after having a few drinks.

"I commonly see patients who have had a couple of drinks and neglected to remove their contact lenses before going to sleep.

"Leaving contacts in overnight creates risks such as infection, ulcers and permanent damage to vision.

"It's these seemingly inconsequential decisions that people make while under the influence of alcohol that can have life-changing consequences."

Healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day. The less you drink, the lower your risk of harm from alcohol<sup>3</sup>.

The next time you're having a drink, think of your eyes and don't end up a blind drunk.

If you think you might be drinking too much, support is available at <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol/alcohol-contacts>.

JulEye is the awareness raising month of the Australian and New Zealand Eye Foundation (ANZEF).

For more information about the Foundation, please visit [www.anzef.com](http://www.anzef.com).

### Media contacts:

Georgia Doering, Timmins Ray Public Relations  
[georgia@timminsray.com.au](mailto:georgia@timminsray.com.au) / 0400 957 383

Alex Arancibia, RANZCO  
[aarancibia@ranzco.edu](mailto:aarancibia@ranzco.edu) / 0425 261 258

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.alcohol.org.nz/research-resources/nz-statistics>

<sup>2</sup> Court, J, Lu, L, Wang, N, McGhee, C (2018). Visual and ocular morbidity in severe open-globe injuries presenting to a regional eye centre in New Zealand

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol#download>