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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Intervention Strategy to Target Underage Drinkers in Victoria

As part of the \$53.5 million National Binge Drinking Strategy announced last year, the Australian Government has signed a funding agreement with the Victorian Government to operate a pilot program in the City of Wyndham to teach young people about the risks associated with underage drinking.

Victoria Police will conduct the \$1.4 million early intervention pilot program in the Wyndham local government area, where police, the Victorian DHS and *Directline* will work together to assist young people and their families to access drug and alcohol services. An individual treatment plan will then be negotiated between the young person and the treatment agency

The pilot is part of an innovative national framework for early intervention and diversion of drinkers, aged under 18 years, who come to the attention of police for liquor related offences. It offers young people the opportunity to better comprehend the risks they are taking.

The pilot program counters early drinking cultures and environments, and emphasises the key message of the Government's current \$20 million advertising campaign: to recognize the costs and consequences of binge drinking and the need to take personal responsibility for drinking habits.

The new \$19.1 million Early Intervention Pilot Program will enable Victorian health and police to work in partnership to help young people at risk of abusing alcohol.

The Australian Government will work with the Victorian Government to ensure national requirements for data collection are met. The pilot can then be fully evaluated to inform future policy and program directions in addressing youth binge drinking.

For all Media inquires please contact the Minister's office on 02 6277 7220.