

MEDIA RELEASE

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**COLLEGE OF
FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGISTS**

Social cost mounts as women in search of fun turn to alcohol

Young Australian women are now as commonly involved in alcohol-fuelled aggression as young men, according to a leading forensic psychologist speaking at the Australian Psychological Society College of Forensic Psychology National Conference in Noosa this weekend.

Dr Gavan Palk, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology & Counselling at Queensland University of Technology, said that young women were increasingly setting out on nights out with the intention of getting drunk, which was leaving some of them at risk of harm.

He said: "Young women feel that they deserve and are entitled to have fun and they go out determined to do so. Often this involves pre-drinks at home, to save money, and unfortunately studies show these are the drinkers likely to drink more in total, and at most risk of suffering injury or assault."

Dr Palk is one of the first experts to research the social motivations behind the increase in drinking among young women. Similar research has been conducted in the UK and other countries, but already Dr Palk has identified a greater incidence of violence among young Australian women drinkers.

He said: "Australia has a greater number of large-scale pubs and clubs which are providing a venue for ladette-style behaviour. There have been attempts to reduce the incidences of violence, but over the long term it seems the only thing that works to reduce alcohol-related violence is to reduce the number of drinking hours."

Dr Palk, who has also investigated attitudes to drinking among women and men aged 18-25, said that men continued to out-drink women, but their rates of consumption were in decline. But young women were increasing their use of alcohol, and the social rituals around it.

Dr Palk said: "Australian men have traditionally gathered in bars, with friends and gained a sense of identity from this. Now, young Australian women are doing the same. Many of the self-confessed 'ladettes' that we interviewed don't perceive that they are trying to 'act like men', but that they are taking advantage of the social freedoms of the past 20 or 30 years."

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The Australian Psychological Society College of Forensic Psychologists National Conference is on August 4-6 in Noosa. More information is available at <http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/cfp/2011-conference/>

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