

## We'll help you, drinkers told

People worried about their drinking shouldn't be afraid to seek help, according to a free Sunbury counselling service.

Sunbury Community Health offers a free alcohol and drugs program for adults, young people and their families.

"The service takes a non-judgmental approach," a spokeswoman said. "Our aim is to restore hope and meaning to people's lives."

The call follows the release of a VicHealth study which revealed that almost half of 2000 participants admitted to drinking at levels associated with significant risk of short-term harm.

People are considered at risk if they drink more than four drinks on a single occasion, while authorities recommend no more than two standard drinks a day.

The national survey found that 46 per cent of respondents had engaged in risky drinking at least once in the previous three months.

VicHealth chief executive Jerril Rechter said the results were alarming.

"Eight of 10 Australians aren't worried about their drinking when, in fact, many drink at a level that's putting them at risk," she said. "Alcohol is second only to tobacco as a preventable cause of drug-related death and hospitalisation."

Anyone wanting to access the Sunbury service can complete a confidential self-analysis form. For more details, phone 9744 4455. For 24-hour support, phone DirectLine on 1800 888 236.