

Media Release

January 31, 2011

Leading the drive for alcohol awareness

More than 100 St John of God Health Care staff abstain from alcohol for FebFast

More than 100 caregivers from St John of God Health Care are giving up alcohol throughout February to increase awareness of alcohol misuse and to raise money for organisations helping young people reduce their use of alcohol and other drugs.

St John of God Health Care's commitment is part of a national event – FebFast – an annual health and charity campaign encouraging people to forgo alcohol for the shortest month of the year.

FebFast is in its fourth year in Australia and St John of God Health Care's team for the 2010 event were top fundraisers with 90 participants taking part raising \$13,000. This year the team is more than 100 strong as the organisation endeavours to further develop awareness of alcohol issues throughout February.

St John of God Health Care was particularly keen to be involved with FebFast again in 2011 because of the organisation's own provision of Social Outreach and Advocacy services which address alcohol and drug issues across Australia and New Zealand, as well as psychiatric drug and alcohol hospitals in Victoria and New South Wales. Alcohol services provided by St John of God Health Care include:

- **DAWN** (Drug and Alcohol Withdrawal Network) – helping people reduce alcohol and drug use within their home across metropolitan Perth.
- **South West Community Drug Service Team** – providing drug and alcohol counselling across a large area of southwest WA, based in Bunbury.
- **Bloomsbury House** – supporting people with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues in Ballarat, Victoria.
- **Pinelodge Clinic** (Vic), **Burwood and Richmond Hospitals** (NSW) psychiatric, alcohol and drug hospitals 'bringing lives back into balance'.
- **St John of God Waipuna** – based in Christchurch, New Zealand, Waipuna's Adventure Therapy program supports young people with drug and alcohol dependencies – this service is a beneficiary of FebFast New Zealand.

"It is tremendously encouraging that more than 100 of our caregivers have committed to giving up alcohol for FebFast," said Anne Russell-Brown, Group Director of Social Outreach and Advocacy at St John of God Health Care.

"We welcome any support for our fundraising efforts again this year but our main objective is to raise awareness of alcohol issues within our communities. It is estimated that nearly half a million Australians consume alcohol at levels considered to be a high risk to health in the long-term. A quarter of young people aged 12 to 17 in WA alone drink at levels deemed to cause harm so it is important that people know the risks."

“Our Social Outreach and Advocacy services in Australia and New Zealand reach out to many people needing help with alcohol and drug use issues and we are committed to working with other organisations that address these kinds of problems.”

In recognition of the health benefits associated with reducing alcohol consumption, St John of God Health Care has paid registration fees for all caregivers taking part in FebFast, meaning the organisation has already committed \$6,000 to the charity.

Individuals interested in taking part in FebFast should note that it is still possible to sign up for the event after February 1 at www.febfast.org.au

ENDS

For more information contact Colin Wood, Public Relations Manager for Social Outreach and Advocacy at St John of God Health Care:

T: (08) 6103 5590 | **M:** 0415 222 805 | **E:** colin.wood@sjog.org.au

NOTES

St John of God Health Care is a leading provider of private hospitals, pathology, and Social Outreach and Advocacy services, throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region.

We return all profits to the communities we serve by:

- Updating and expanding technology and facilities
- Expanding existing services and acquiring new services
- Providing Social Outreach and Advocacy services to people experiencing disadvantage

Social Outreach and Advocacy services provide significant care and relief for people experiencing disadvantage throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in areas where we have identified gaps in current service provisions.

Through Social Outreach and Advocacy, St John of God Health Care utilises its existing expertise and reputation to help people and communities help themselves improve health and wellbeing outcomes wherever possible. Our dedication to ‘early intervention’ means that we aim to address health issues as early as possible in their life cycle with the intention of preventing long-term or chronic health factors.

More information is available at: <http://www.sjog.org.au/outreach>