

Don't be slave to drink

ROBYN RILEY

VICTORIANS are being encouraged to stop and think before they drink as the festive season hits full swing.

The head of research at Monash University's Turning Point, Victoria Manning, says the next few weeks may be challenging as people juggle end-of-year celebrations, family get-togethers, music festivals and nights out.

Associate Professor Manning said up to one in four Australians experienced alcohol problems and this time of year could be particularly tough – especially for those wanting to change their drinking habits.

"The issue is that often we

are drinking on autopilot and people may be letting their hair down after lockdowns," Professor Manning said.

"Alcohol cues are everywhere, so for those wanting to reduce or stop drinking, some practical strategies may help at this time of year.

"These can be as simple as attending events with a friend who knows you are not drinking, having an excuse to leave early or taking your own alcohol-free beverages."

Professor Manning said society needed to normalise not drinking alcohol. "You

shouldn't have to find an excuse not to drink," she said.

For those who chose to drink, Professor Manning advised making good decisions.

"Slow your blood alcohol consumption, don't get into rounds, alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks and make sure you have them with food," she said.

She also suggested downloading the free brain-training app developed by Turning Point called SWiPE.

Developed by addiction specialists, it uses neuroscience to train the brain to avoid

alcohol cues and consider healthy alternatives.

A study of 1300 people using the app found a reduction in their alcohol consumption on average 8.4 standard drinks a week.

Melbourne distance runner, author and motivational speaker Nikki Langman says the app is a great idea.

"The more you engage with it, the more it puts those healthy images and happy memories at the forefront of your mind," she said.

Ms Langman has been sober for six years and shares

her story, she says, to inspire others and reduce stigma.

At age seven she remembers making a conscious association that when you have a problem, a drink will fix it.

"I'd seen adults do that when they were upset," she said. "The first time I poured myself a vodka I knew I had to keep it a secret. I was stealing from my parents and from my friends' parents. It took many years to recognise there was a much bigger storm brewing."

She was admitted to rehab for the first of many times at 15. "I finally learnt the differ-



Nikki Langman

ence between admitting and accepting," she said. "Admitting you have an unhealthy relationship with alcohol is a good start, but it's a statement. Accepting you cannot drink like other people – and really owning that – is an impetus for change, and ultimately liberation."

EDITORIAL, PAGE 22

Travel for free over holiday season

MITCH CLARKE

VICTORIANS will be able to catch public transport for free over the festive period.

Train, tram and bus fares on the metropolitan and regional network will be wiped from 3am on Christmas Day until 3am on Boxing Day.

Free travel will also be on offer for Victorians wanting to ring in the new year, with fares to be scrapped from 6pm on New Year's Eve until 6am on New Year's Day.

Services will continue across the metropolitan network all night on New Year's Eve, with the state government putting on additional services after midnight to ensure revelers can get home.

Trains will run at a five to 15-minute frequency between midnight and 1.45am, a 30-minute frequency between 1.45am and 2.45am, and every hour from 2.45am.

On the tram network, most services will operate all night – running at a five to 15-minute frequency between midnight and 3am, and every 60 minutes from 3am.

On Sunday Public Transport Minister Ben Carroll urged all Victorians to take advantage of the offer.

"If you're going to get on the beers on Christmas Day or New Year's Eve, make sure you also get on public transport," he said. "Free travel on Christmas Day and New Year's Day really makes it easier for people to celebrate with family and friends."

Passengers using a myki on the free travel days won't be required to touch on and off and will not be charged if they do.

Passengers on V/Line services will still need to book their Christmas Day and New Year's Eve travel on reserved services – but will be issued a ticket free of charge.

No ticket is required for regional bus travel.



DJ John Course, model Tess Homann and DJ Andy Murphy are ready to help Melbourne ring in the new year. Picture: Jason Edwards

TIME TO GET NEW YEAR TOES TAPPING

JACKIE EPSTEIN

TICKETS to New Year's Eve parties are being snapped up, as big social events make a comeback to ring in 2023.

DJ John Course will get people dancing at The Prince Deck in St Kilda, alongside the likes of Andy Murphy, Piero and Sam Bennett. "I am super excited to

welcome NYE at The Prince Deck for a big three-hour set of future house anthems and club classics with some of my favourite DJs and especially at one of the best rooftops in Melbourne to celebrate 2022 and start 2023," Course said.

Elsewhere in Melbourne the festivities will be in full swing, with Crown

Melbourne a popular destination.

Lucas Restaurants is offering endless bubbles and dining packages, with views of fireworks at city restaurants Society Dining Room and Lillian.

Chef Shane Delia's new bar Jayda is hosting a ticketed cocktail event, with his restaurant Maha offering

a three-course meal for \$160pp or a six-course meal for \$220pp.

St Kilda's Stokehouse is offering a four-course dinner accompanied by caviar, oysters and cocktails.

There are limited tickets left for Prahran hotspot Entrecote's NYE masquerade ball, billed as the party of the century.