

DRINKING SURVEY

Alarm bells on young boozers

EXCLUSIVE
■ **Cathy O'Leary**
Medical Editor

Young WA men are drinking on average 16 standard drinks on a big night, according to alarming figures that confirm the State's reputation for binge drinking. A survey of more than 4250 adult drinkers found that 77 per cent qualified as binge drinkers by having five drinks or more in a single session, with men aged 18 to 30 without a tertiary education the heaviest drinkers.

Even across the whole sample, people notched up an average of 11 standard drinks on a big drinking occasion. The results, from a Healthway-funded study of attitudes to health warnings on alcohol, were released ahead of today's launch of the WA Cancer Prevention Research Unit, jointly funded by Curtin University's faculty of health sciences and the Cancer Council of WA. Curtin professor Simone Pettigrew, who will head the unit, said the findings were timely and confirmed many West Australians

were binge drinkers who drank far more than recommended levels. "This was part of a bigger study but it gave us a chance to see who's drinking what, and it was in a big group where we were confident we had a really good mix of drinkers across both genders," she said. "Across the whole group, the average number of standard drinks on their heaviest drinking times was 11, which constitutes a very high risk, and that's the average so for some it was a lot more.

"And it's even higher again in younger males." Professor Pettigrew said drinking patterns in WA were polarised because more people were abstaining from alcohol or drinking at very light levels but many of those who were drinking were doing so at very harmful levels. Apart from other health concerns, excessive drinking increased the risk of getting cancer, which was still not widely understood. "With things like heart disease, people tend to be more aware of

the risk factors and what they can do to prevent it, but there are so many different types of cancer and there is a lot of fear about hereditary factors and people aren't sure how they can prevent it," she said. "That's why we need consistent, user-friendly messages we can convey to the public." Cancer Council WA education and research director Terry Slevin said the unit was important because more than 11,000 cases of cancer were diagnosed in WA each year, with a least a third of them preventable.

Forrest is WA's top business leader

■ **Kim Macdonald**

Andrew Forrest was named WA Business Leader of the Year at a gala ceremony at Crown Perth last night, held to recognise the State's best businesses and the people who run them. Mr Forrest, founder of Fortescue Metals Group, won the title at the Australian Institute of Management WA *WestBusiness* Pinnacle Awards. His contribution to WA extends well beyond mining and includes the promotion of Australian farm produce through a partnership with China, the creation of a landmark paper designed to end Aboriginal disadvantage and the donation of tens of millions of dollars to charity. Last year's WA Business Leader of the Year, Wesfarmers managing director Richard Goyder, presented the award to Mr Forrest in front of 660 guests. They included Mr Forrest wife's Nicola, WA Governor Kerry Sanderson, former governor Ken Michael, Crown Perth chief Barry Felstead, Azure Capital executive chairman John Poynton and State Opposition Leader Mark McGowan. Mr Forrest donated the \$10,000 prize that came with being named WA Business Leader of the Year to the Ochre Dance Company, a group he said encouraged new talent in the arts sector. The Pinnacle Awards presenter, Channel 7's Andrew O'Keefe, detailed how eight outstanding West Australian



Many interests: Fortescue Metals Group founder Andrew Forrest last night. Picture: Bohdan Warchomij

businesses showed excellence in different disciplines. The category winners, who each received \$10,000 to donate to charities of their choice, were ■ Aboriginal leadership development excellence: Rio Tinto ■ Corporate social responsi-

bility excellence: Hawaiian Property Group ■ Customer service excellence: Sparkle Dental Joon-dalup ■ Green business excellence: Scott Print ■ Human resource management excellence: Patersons Stadium

■ Innovation excellence: Carnegie Wave Energy ■ Marketing excellence: RAC WA ■ Emerging business excellence: HealthEngine Full details of winners and reports on WA business' night of nights will be featured in *The Weekend West*

Crime writer PD James dies

■ **London**

Acclaimed crime writer PD James, whose books included *Death Comes to Pemberley*, has died aged 94, her publisher said last night. Faber & Faber said she died at her home in Oxford. PD James had instant success with her first novel *Cover Her Face* in 1962, launching her career and that of her main character, the policeman and poet Adam Dalgliesh. As Dalgliesh was promoted to superintendent and commander, James' star was on the rise and over a career that produced 20 novels, including 11 Dalgliesh books, she accumulated a host of awards including the Crime Writers' Association's Diamond Dagger and the Mystery Writers of America Grandmaster award. She was elevated to the House of Lords in 1991, where she sat with the Conservatives as Baroness James of Holland Park. *Death Comes to Pemberley* was published in January last year.



Major talent: PD James

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