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Casks make it easier to know how much you're drinking

Most Australian wine casks will soon carry a full-size representation of what constitutes a standard drink as well as consumer information promoting responsible alcohol consumption.

The voluntary initiative, developed by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA), has the support of the majority of wine cask producers.

Products initially involved include well-known brands such as Banrock Station, Berri, Coolabah, Hardys, Renmano, Sunnyvale, Stanley and Yalumba.

The new-look casks began appearing on retailers' shelves in mid-August.

The prominent information panel includes a diagram indicating what an average glass of wine looks like and how many "standard drinks" it amounts to.

"We see this as the next step in our commitment to education and information," said WFA's chief executive, Stephen Strachan. "The aim is to provide some clarity because Government data shows most Australians are still confused about the concept of a standard drink.

"Many people know how many standard drinks are recommended, but actually visualising what a standard drink is can be a problem because the size of wine glasses varies greatly.

"With a bottle you can easily see how much has been consumed; half the bottle represents half the total number of standard drinks, as stated on the label. But casks contain significantly more servings and you cannot see the level as a guide.

"We hope by making a clear representation very visible on the side of the cask it will be easier for consumers to assess how many standard drink equivalents they have poured."

Cask sales have been declining steadily for years, but still account for 38.5% of wine sold in Australia.

Research carried out for WFA by London-based Wine Intelligence shows that the typical Australian cask consumer is aged over 55, earns less than \$55,000 a year and generally has only one or two glasses with their evening meal.

"The vast majority of Australians choose to drink in moderation and we strongly urge all wine drinkers to do so," Mr Strachan said.

"The important thing is to keep providing more information and more assistance to allow them to make sensible choices," he said.

The new information panels, which feature prominently on the side pouring panel of the cask, encourage consumers to access information about moderate consumption, including the official National Health & Medical Research Council guidelines.

Mr Strachan said WFA believed the way to fight alcohol abuse was through education, a commitment to try to change Australia's binge drinking culture and targeted initiatives which addressed specific problem areas.