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EXPERT PREGNANCY HEALTH WARNINGS FINALLY BREAK THROUGH ALCOHOL INDUSTRY'S BLOCKADE

17 February 2020: After eight years of obstruction by the alcohol industry, mandatory pregnancy health warnings on all alcoholic products have been submitted for final approval.

The National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (NOFASD) and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) strongly support the FSANZ proposal on pregnancy warning labels submitted to Food Ministers today.

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) took action to legislate pregnancy warning labels in 2018, after the alcohol industry's voluntary labelling scheme was exposed as an abject failure, with warning labels appearing on only 52 per cent of alcohol products.

"Women have a right to be informed about the harm that alcohol can cause to unborn children, including miscarriages, stillbirths, low birth weights and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)," said NOFASD CEO Louise Gray.

"NOFASD's vision is the prevention of alcohol exposed pregnancies in Australia, and an improved quality of life for those affected by FASD, including those living with FASD and their parents. The introduction of effective warning labels is an important step to realising that vision," Said Ms Gray.

The FSANZ consumer testing of the industry's opaque message indicated that overall for women both in Australia and New Zealand, the statement, *it is safest not to drink while pregnant*, performed least well of the four statements tested in conveying the message not to drink alcohol while pregnant. It also performed least well in terms of its believability, credibility and convincingness.

FARE Director of Policy, Trish Hepworth said "The National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) 2016, found that 25 per cent of women consumed alcohol after becoming aware of the pregnancy, and 49 per cent drank before being aware of their pregnancy,"[i] she said.

Ms Hepworth says this hugely significant step will help protect future generations of Australians, and FSANZ has concluded that the human and financial benefits will far outweigh the relatively small cost of introducing this scheme.

"Today's decision heralds the end to the alcohol industry's failed voluntary efforts that served only to mislead and confuse consumers," Ms Hepworth said.

Trish Hepworth is available for interview.





Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education



National
Organisation
for Fetal Alcohol
Spectrum Disorders

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. Nearly 6,000 lives are lost every year and more than 144,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventive health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harm by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.

^[i] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). *Smoking and drinking in pregnancy*. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-children/contents/health/smoking-and-drinking-in-pregnancy>

