

MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTERS URGED TO APPROVE EFFECTIVE PREGNANCY HEALTH WARNING ON ALCOHOL LABELS

Food safety Ministers are being urged to put the health and wellbeing of families and communities first by approving the most effective pregnancy health warning label on alcohol products when they meet next month.

Health and community groups commend today's recommendation by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) that a pregnancy health warning label with three colours – black, white and red – is most effective and will achieve the greatest impact.

“In particular, the use of red makes the label easily identifiable to the eye and conveys a message of warning to the community that alcohol use in pregnancy causes harm,” said Professor Elizabeth Elliott, Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Sydney and Co-Director of FASD Australia, the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence.

“These harms, which are preventable, include Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth, birth defects and developmental problems,” Professor Elliott said.

FSANZ has amended the signal wording on the label from the ‘Health Warning’ to a ‘Pregnancy Warning’ and this narrowing of audience focus has disappointed the health and community groups advocating for an evidence-based label.

CEO of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education Caterina Giorgi says, “For years, the alcohol lobby, funded by large alcohol corporations, have campaigned for policymakers and Ministers to block an effective pregnancy health warning on alcohol products, citing cost arguments that have been shown to be incorrect.

“And now that the decision has been made for warnings to be mandatory, these lobby groups are pushing for the label to be watered down — for it to use words with less cut through and to remove required colours, which would make it invisible,” Ms Giorgi said.

FSANZ has today reaffirmed that the cost of implementing a pregnancy health warning label will be significantly less than the ongoing human and financial burden of FASD within the community.

NOFASD Australia CEO Louise Gray says the alcohol industry should accept responsibility for its products and provide a clear warning about the risks of alcohol use in pregnancy.

“FASD is caused only by alcohol. It is right that alcohol companies provide an honest health warning label on their products to help reduce the instances of this lifelong condition,” Ms Gray said.

FSANZ has also suggested the implementation period be extended from two to three years to allow the alcohol industry ample time to factor this one-off update into their label design rotation.

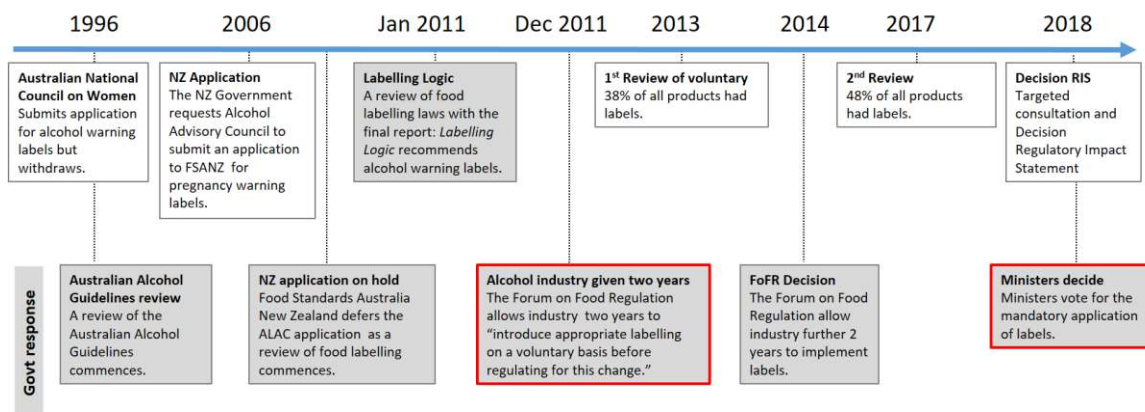
“Alcohol companies constantly change labels to include vintage details or refresh brands, so three years is more than enough time to incorporate the pregnancy health warning,” Ms Gray said.

On 17 July, Ministers on the Forum on Food Regulation will make their decision on whether to endorse the FSANZ label and Ms Giorgi is urging Ministers to listen to the community above the alcohol lobby and support an effective pregnancy health warning.

“The majority of Australians want an effective pregnancy health warning label on alcohol products, and more than 1,500 individuals and 150 organisations across Australia and New Zealand have recently signed Open Letters calling for Ministers to do the right thing for future generations,” Ms Giorgi said.

- [Australian Open Letter](#)
- [New Zealand Open Letter](#)

BACKGROUND: TIMELINE OF ALCOHOL HEALTH WARNING LABEL DECISION



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Ms Caterina Giorgi and Professor Elizabeth Elliott are available for interview.

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