

Media release

NEW POLLING: AUSTRALIANS SUPPORT A STRONG PREGNANCY HEALTH WARNING FOR ALCOHOL PRODUCTS

BUT FEARS GROW AS 'BIG ALCOHOL' LOBBIES HARD TO KILL OFF EXPERT RECOMMENDATION

17 March 2020: The majority of Australians support a visible, red health warning on alcohol products which clearly alerts the community to the harm from using alcohol when pregnant and the risks to unborn babies, new national survey data has revealed.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) CEO Caterina Giorgi says the latest YouGov polling data shows that 70% of Australians support action now to introduce a new pregnancy warning label which has been developed by experts and approved by the food safety regulator, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

The poll findings coincide with concerns the alcohol industry is unduly pressuring the Commonwealth and some State and Territory Food and Health Ministers to waver in their joint commitment to sign off the new mandatory pregnancy warning label ahead of their meeting on Friday.

"The alcoholic products industry doesn't want the new label, which is red, bold and sends a clear health warning. This can only be because they don't want the community to know the real risks and harm that alcohol can cause during pregnancy," Ms Giorgi said.

The latest health data, summarised in the *FARE alcohol consumption and pregnancy polling snapshot*, confirms that many Australians are not aware that alcohol is harmful to health, especially during pregnancy.

"When we asked Australians about the alcohol industry's ineffective labels, which appear on less than half of all alcoholic products, it was not surprising that almost a quarter (23%) of respondents didn't know that using alcohol when pregnant is harmful," Ms Giorgi said.

"Almost half (46%) are unaware of the risk of stillbirth, while one third (30%) of Australians don't know that alcohol causes irreversible brain damage, a condition called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)," she said.

The poll found that less than one third (31%) of Australians recall ever seeing a warning on labels about the risk of drinking alcohol when pregnant.



This important new data has been shared with the Ministers ahead of their meeting on Friday to decide whether to give final sign-off on an improved, mandatory health warning label recommended by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

In reaching its decision on a new label, FSANZ systematically reviewed the evidence, consumer tested elements of label design, modelled costings and consulted widely with the alcohol industry and health groups.

“FSANZ has listened to the community and health experts, yet still the alcohol industry vehemently opposes the recommended label and is desperately lobbying Ministers to have the design of the pregnancy warning weakened,” Ms Giorgi said.

“This Friday Ministers can show that they can put the health and wellbeing of our children ahead of alcohol industry interests by supporting the FSANZ pregnancy warning label,” she said.

Caterina Giorgi is available for interview.

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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.