# FASD Awareness Day: Alcohol & pregnancy information must be rigorous and regulated

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FASD describes a range of lifelong physical and/or neurodevelopmental impairments that can result from prenatal alcohol exposure. This outcome occurs when parents are either not aware of the dangers of alcohol use when pregnant or planning a pregnancy, or not supported to stay healthy and strong during pregnancy.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says recent revelations that the alcohol industry deliberately misled the public about alcohol consumption during pregnancy demonstrates that it is vital that government ensures information around alcohol and pregnancy is rigorous and regulated.

“Just last week the alcohol industry was caught red-handed misrepresenting information about the dangers of alcohol and pregnancy on DrinkWise posters distributed to doctors’ surgeries across the country. It’s imperative that the government counters such blatant corporate self-interest to ensure that this reckless tactic by the alcohol industry can never be repeated,” he said.

Mr Thorn says another example where government regulation of information on the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy falls short, is on the products themselves, with FARE continuing to call on government decision-makers to mandate clear and accurate alcohol pregnancy warning labels on all alcohol products as a matter of priority.

“It’s astounding that in Australia alcohol companies are still not legally required to include pregnancy warning labels on their products. The six years of the current voluntary alcohol pregnancy warning label scheme has served only to confuse and mislead consumers, and recent research shows the current system has failed dismally,” Mr Thorn said.

FARE is also calling for a commitment for greater investments in clinical services, through expanding the rollout of FASD clinics.

Mr Thorn says that while Australian health services have developed some highly efficient models for FASD referral, screening and diagnosis, further investment in FASD clinics would provide much-needed support for people with FASD and their families.

Victoria now has its first dedicated FASD clinic in Shepparton, which opened in July. It is heartening that Victoria now boasts a facility to diagnose FASD, but the demand on the clinic’s services does serve as a reminder of the need for the further investment in treatment, the scale of the issue and the urgent need for continued effective prevention efforts across the country,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn also renewed calls for efforts to realise the National FASD Action Plan, which is due for release at the end of this year.

“Government must stick to its commitment of a National FASD Action Plan, which is due for release at the end of this year. A successful rollout of the plan will ensure efforts to effectively address FASD in Australia do not falter,” Mr Thorn said.

[view media release in pdf](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FASD-AWARENESS-DAY-ALCOHOL-PREGNANCY-INFO-MUST-BE-RIGOROUS-AND-REGULATED-Final-07092018.pdf)

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