



Media Release

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CANBERRANS TO SWAP THE PUB FOR THE BUB

20 August 2014: This September Canberrans are being urged to ‘*swap the pub for your bub*’ and take a break from alcohol to support a loved one who is pregnant.

With a recent national study indicating that many pregnant women may not be receiving the advice that no alcohol is the safest option when pregnant, an ACT Government funded campaign, *Pregnant Pause*, aims to raise awareness of this important message in the Territory.

Pregnant Pause challenges participants to go alcohol free to support the pregnancy of their partner, family member, loved one or friend.

Recent studies have found that almost half of all pregnant women drank before knowing they were pregnant and 19.5 per cent continued to drink once they became aware of their pregnancy.

Research also shows that 77 per cent of women who consume alcohol during their pregnancy do so with their partner.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive Michael Thorn, says that the simple act of joining your loved one by being alcohol-free during her pregnancy will make it easier for her to abstain from alcohol too.

“Pregnant Pause is a campaign that builds a support system to help pregnant couples achieve an alcohol-free pregnancy,” Mr Thorn said.

A *National Health Performance Authority* child and maternal health report released earlier this month indicated that more than half of all pregnant women in the ACT failed to receive antenatal care in the first trimester.

As a result many may have missed the opportunity to receive important preventive advice about alcohol consumption early in their pregnancy. This is of concern because prenatal exposure to alcohol can lead to a range of severe adverse consequences during pregnancy including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

FASD is the most common preventable cause of non-genetic, developmental disability in Australia and babies born with FASD have devastating developmental disabilities that can affect them for the rest of their lives.

“The good news is that FASD is not a genetic disorder. We don’t need complicated gene therapy or major pharmaceutical breakthroughs to treat or prevent FASD. We can prevent FASD by not consuming alcohol during pregnancy,” Mr Thorn said.

ACT MLA, Yvette Berry says Pregnant Pause will play an important role in both raising awareness and supporting alcohol free pregnancies.

“The ACT Health Promotion Grants Program supports innovative activities that enable ACT residents to live a healthy and active life. Pregnant Pause aligns perfectly with our focus on reducing the harmful and hazardous consumption of alcohol. The ACT Government is proud to partner with such a wonderful initiative,” Ms Berry said.

The campaign will feature print and radio advertisements, community activities, events and service announcements to be broadcast during August and September, leading into World FASD Day on 9 September.

Duncan Buchannan, an Everyday Ambassador for the campaign, was so inspired by his partner during her pregnancy that he was eager to find a way to give something back.

“During our pregnancy, my wife did everything she could to ensure that our daughter was born happy and healthy, particularly by not drinking during the pregnancy. So I did the Pregnant Pause challenge, in support of my wife and other mothers who want to make healthy decisions for their new baby,” Mr Buchannan said.

Mr Thorn agrees that Pregnant Pause offers a worthwhile and meaningful way for Dads-to-be to be more engaged with their partner’s pregnancy.

“Pregnant Pause encourages men to think about the whole issue of alcohol use in pregnancy. By taking a pause in their drinking while their partners are pregnant, then their partners are much more likely to be able to stop drinking during the pregnancy and avoid harming their unborn child,” Mr Thorn said.

Those wishing to take a Pregnant Pause can take the pledge to go alcohol free in support of a pregnant loved one at www.pregnantpause.com.au.

Media Contact:

Jeremy Henderson

0425 559 710

Jeremy.Henderson@fare.org.au

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. Over 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms 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.

For further information visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au.