

## ACT COMMUNITY CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN'S ALCOHOL-FREE PREGNANCIES

**18 June 2020:** A new campaign has gone live today encouraging ACT businesses and organisations to become Pregnant Pause Community Heroes and join a growing network that supports mums-to-be in having alcohol-free pregnancies.

Pregnant Pause is a thriving community of pregnant women and their partners, support people, families and friends, focused on support and awareness that there is no 'safe' amount of drinking, no 'safe' alcohol-strength and no 'safe' time during pregnancy to drink alcohol.

The ACT Pregnant Pause Community Hero campaign was launched across Canberra's airwaves today by Ambassador and 106.3FM host Kristen Davidson and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE).

Kristen, who is also pregnant, is excited that Pregnant Pause is connecting with the Canberra business community and other organisations to widen the support network around local mums-to-be, who give birth to around 6,000 babies every year in the ACT.

"We know it takes a village to raise a child and Pregnant Pause is connecting with organisations who reach out to pregnant women, so that everyone in the community is on board with the important message that alcohol-free pregnancies are the way to go," Ms Davidson said.

"Being pregnant for the first time, I am aware that it's a big responsibility and sometimes challenging to make changes to things like diet and routines to give babies the healthiest start in life. And this is especially true when it comes to drinking alcohol.

"Becoming pregnant can be a time of joy and celebration, with milestones along the journey acknowledged and shared through social interactions and events involving alcohol. So it can be tricky for women who are pregnant to be at the centre of these celebrations in our community while abstaining from alcohol," Ms Davidson said.

The National Health and Medical Research Council's alcohol guidelines say women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy should not drink any alcohol. This is because alcohol can cause miscarriage, still or premature birth, low birth weights and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Yet there are still many mixed messages in the community about how much alcohol is safe during pregnancy.

The aim of Pregnant Pause is to raise awareness of the advice that no amount of alcohol is safe for an unborn baby, to help reduce the number of alcohol-exposed pregnancies, which is currently approximately 76,000 alcohol-exposed pregnancies across Australia annually.

“I’ve been an ambassador for Pregnant Pause for a while now and I have always understood it, but now being a mum for the very first time this year, I get it, I feel it. I feel those mixed messages, and it all comes from a beautiful place, but every single woman and support person has a different experience when it comes to pregnancy. And they want to share because they love you but those messages aren’t always in line with the drinking guidelines,” Ms Davidson said.

The Pregnant Pause campaign is an initiative of FARE, supported by the ACT Government under the ACT Health Promotion Grants Program.

ACT Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith says, “Alcohol harm in Australia is a serious issue and one of our greatest preventive health challenges. Not-for-profit organisations play a vital role in helping to reduce alcohol harm and raise awareness about the risks and impacts in our community.

“Since 2014, FARE has provided support and guidance for pregnant women and those close to them, encouraging women to pledge to be alcohol free during their pregnancies. The ACT Government is pleased to be supporting the next phase of Pregnant Pause, recognising the role the wider community can play. By engaging with workplaces, organisations, health professionals and campaign ambassadors, FARE has created a program that benefits and involves the entire ACT community,” Minister Stephen-Smith said.

FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi says Pregnant Pause is hoping to connect ACT organisations and businesses, creating a Territory-wide network of supportive environments right across Canberra.

“The Pregnant Pause Community Heroes campaign aims to make the alcohol-free pregnancy journey a little easier by building a safe and welcoming environment for women who are pregnant to be alcohol-free. Not only do we have more information for mums-to-be and their family and friends seeking advice on alcohol and pregnancy, but this information will now be better shared and understood across the community,” Ms Giorgi said.

“Whether you’re a wellness spa, restaurant, café, sports club, gym, gallery, early learning centre or a doctor’s surgery – Pregnant Pause welcomes you as a Community Hero for our mums-to-be.

“It’s important that we share a consistent message about the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy, and we thank the ACT Government for its continuing support of the Pregnant Pause campaign,” Ms Giorgi said.

Ms Davidson says being pregnant while being the Pregnant Pause Ambassador means she completely believes in the potential for the Community Hero campaign to turn into a wonderful supportive community network.

“I wanted to jump on board again this year and say you’re not left out, we are all in this together and we can still have those celebrations but we don’t have to have it with alcohol, there’s a whole range of different options.

“And if you are feeling stressed and you are feeling hormonal, and you are reaching for a drink there are support networks and systems out there for you, and there is no shame, there is no judgement and we are all in this together,” Ms Davidson said.



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Businesses and organisations are encouraged to sign up to become Community Heroes by visiting <http://www.pregnantpause.com.au/>

Further information about alcohol and pregnancy guidelines is also available on the Pregnant Pause website.

**ENDS**

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