

AUSTRALIANS VOICE SUPPORT FOR ACTION ON OUR CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

24 June 2020: Speaking with one voice, Australians are calling on food safety Ministers to prioritise the health and wellbeing of children and prevent the lifelong disability Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

A [national Open Letter was launched today](#) urging the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation to ensure that new alcohol product labels are effective in warning that alcohol can cause lifelong harm to unborn babies.

The letter is addressed to the Ministers, who are scheduled to meet in a few weeks, urging them to agree on an honest, visible label that clearly warns of the risks of alcohol in pregnancy.

More than 100 organisations and over 1,000 individuals have already signed the Open Letter, including one of Australia's most respected Australian leaders, former Governor General, the Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce.

"Across my life I have engaged in a myriad of child health issues. FASD is a preventable disability so as a grandmother and mother it deeply saddens me that babies are being born with brain damage" Ms Bryce said.

Quentin Bryce is Patron of the organisation NOFASD, the peak that provides a voice for individuals and families living with FASD. Ms Bryce says looking after the health of future generations of Australians is paramount. It must always be our top priority.

"The welfare of families should be at the heart of our society and systems. Everyone who has signed this letter is respectfully asking our Government to keep this top of mind when they are considering the most effective warning label for alcohol products," Ms Bryce said.

Support for the Open Letter reflects a new report released by FARE today showing the majority voice within the Australian community is calling for clear, visible health warnings on alcohol products.

The polling report, *Alcohol Health Warnings + Pregnancy*, shows 70 per cent of Australians are willing to take action to get clearer health warnings on alcohol products.

"I want to do everything I can as Patron of NOFASD to help to ensure that our young ones have the best prospects for a healthy life. I encourage all Australians to get behind this vitally important message," Ms Bryce said.

FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi says extended demographic results from the recent YouGov Galaxy poll found that people in the age group most likely to be thinking about having a baby are the least aware that drinking alcohol when pregnant is harmful to an unborn baby.



“Overall, around a quarter of Australians were unaware of the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy, and almost one third of people unaware that alcohol causes FASD,” Ms Giorgi said.

“When we unpacked the results, it showed that people aged between 25 and 34 years are the least aware that drinking alcohol when pregnant is harmful to an unborn baby, with 35 per cent unable to correctly identify zero alcohol as the only safe amount.

“This is the age group of people most likely to be thinking about having a baby and we need to raise their level of awareness about the risks of alcohol use in pregnancy,” Ms Giorgi said.

Mr Giorgi says the report provides important insights for Ministers to consider.

“The report highlights that the current pregnancy label, which is only on some alcohol products, is ineffective. Only 31 per cent of Australians recall seeing any labels, which tells us that the current label design is not visible,” Ms Giorgi said.

“Ministers will meet on 17 July to discuss the pregnancy health warning label, knowing that their decision will impact the lives of future generations. The meeting will be an opportunity to put the health and wellbeing of families first by supporting a visible, honest and clear health pregnancy warning label,” Ms Giorgi said.

ALCOHOL HEALTH WARNINGS + PREGNANCY

POLLING REPORT – EXTENDED DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS

Key Findings

- The majority (70%) of Australians support an effective health warning on all alcohol products and would take action on the issue.
- Almost a quarter (23%) of Australians are not aware that drinking alcohol when pregnant is harmful to an unborn baby.
 - People aged 25-34 years old are the least aware, with 35% unable to correctly identify zero alcohol as the only safe amount.
- Awareness of the specific health conditions caused by alcohol use during pregnancy is low. Almost one third (30%) of Australians are unaware alcohol can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and almost one half (46%) of Australians are unaware of the risk of stillbirth.
 - People aged 25-34 years old are the least aware that FASD is associated with alcohol use during pregnancy (39% unaware), closely followed by 18-24 year-olds (35% unaware).
 - Men are less aware than women of health conditions associated with alcohol use during pregnancy, particularly for FASD, with 63% men aware and 77% women aware.



- Less than one third (31%) of Australians recall seeing the current voluntary alcohol industry label on alcohol products.

EDITOR'S NOTE: State-based findings available in the Report, which can be found at FARE.org.au

Media interviews:

Media contact: Jemima Turner or Clare Ross - 0429 291 120.

Ms Giorgi is immediately available for comment.

Ms Bryce is available for comment after 11am on Wednesday.

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.