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## **TASMANIAN FOOD MINISTERS URGED TO VOTE FOR A RED, BLACK AND WHITE ‘HEALTH WARNING’ LABEL ON ALCOHOL**

**15 July 2020:** The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania (ATDC) is urging Minister Jeremy Rockliff and Minister Sarah Courtney to support an effective, evidence-based pregnancy health warning label for alcohol products.

The Tasmanian Ministers are on the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (Forum), comprising 10 governments at state, territory and national levels, which will vote on an alcohol warning label this Friday.

The vote is directly aimed at preventing harm caused by prenatal alcohol exposure, including miscarriage, stillbirth and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

ATDC is one of more than 150 organisations and 3,500 community leaders and advocates across Australia, who have signed an Open Letter that has been sent to the Forum Ministers today.

ATDC Chief Executive Alison Lai says, “We encourage Ministers Rockliff and Courtney to respond to the community’s plea for the red, white and black pregnancy health warning label that has been found to be most effective in alerting people to the risks associated with alcohol use and pregnancy”.

“ATDC members work very closely with people impacted by alcohol and other drugs across Tasmania, and we wholeheartedly support a visible health warning label for alcohol, because the health and wellbeing of our families and children should be our highest priority, said Mrs Lai.

“Our Ministers have shown real leadership during the current health crisis, and with the same level of leadership and guidance on this alcohol health warning label we can safeguard the health and wellbeing of Australian families and give our future children the best start in life,” Mrs Lai said.

This grassroots appeal to Forum Ministers to do the right thing and adopt an honest, visible health warning label, coincides with the first-ever comprehensive consumer testing of alcohol health warnings.

The consumer testing, conducted by IPSOS for the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), compares the effectiveness of five different warnings, building on years of evidence-based work by the food standards authority, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

The consumer testing compared the evidence-based warning developed by FSANZ (warning 1) with other warning designs that the alcohol industry has been lobbying Ministers to consider.



FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi says, “The consumer testing found the vast majority of people (96 per cent) associate danger and hazards with a red, black and white-coloured warning label, while only four per cent of people perceive a label without the colour red to be a warning”.

“Having a red, black and white label is important so the message can be understood by all Australians regardless of their literacy levels or cultural backgrounds,” Ms Giorgi said.

“The majority of people (73 per cent) were either ‘very unlikely’ or ‘unlikely’ to notice the warning in the alcohol company’s brand colours with a transparent background, known as ‘contrast’. And yet the alcohol industry is lobbying Ministers to adopt a camouflaged label, which would, in effect, be invisible,” she said.

The vast majority of consumers surveyed (95 per cent) also agreed that people have a right to know that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause lifelong harm to an unborn baby, and Ms Giorgi says Ministers have a responsibility to raise awareness of this risk among all Australians.

“Messages about alcohol use in pregnancy aren’t just for women who are pregnant, but are relevant and important for the whole community. The consumer testing found that a label with the term ‘pregnancy warning’ is far less relevant to people (24 per cent) than the signal wording ‘health warning’, which was relevant to 67 per cent,” Ms Giorgi said.

“The signal wording ‘health warning’ is a critical component of an effective warning because the views of people in a woman’s social network has a bearing on whether or not they drink alcohol before, during and after their pregnancy,” she said.



Ms Giorgi says, “This latest consumer testing will give Ministers further information to support the effective red, black and white pregnancy health warning on alcohol products when they meet to vote on the warning on Friday”.

**To arrange interviews, contact Clare Ross 0429 291120:**

- Open Letter call to action: ATDC CEO Alison Lai
- Label consumer testing: FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi