

MEDIA RELEASE

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Alcohol labels to help prevent harm to babies

FEDERAL: New research released today shows one in three Australian women are drinking while pregnant or breastfeeding, prompting health experts to renew calls for health advisory labels on all alcohol products. These labels would better inform consumers and help prevent harms, such as fetal alcohol syndrome.

The consumption of alcohol during pregnancy can contribute to:

- miscarriage
- prematurity
- small babies who are more prone to illness, slow growth and development or even
- still-birth.

“At the moment, there is more information on a carton of milk than a bottle of alcohol. People have the right to know what they are drinking and how it can impact their health and their baby’s health, so that they can make more informed decisions about the drinks they purchase and consume,” said John Rogerson, CEO Australian Drug Foundation.

The Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation survey showed that expectant or new mothers have an awareness of the dangers alcohol poses to their babies, however health labels would provide an instant reminder of the risks.

“Health labels can play a role in influencing consumer behaviour because they target people at that critical point of decision-making, in this case when they buy alcohol and when they drink it,” said Mr Rogerson.

At least 43 countries already require some form of on-product labelling, with 14 of these having mandatory health labels primarily around alcohol use and pregnancy. Previously released figures from VicHealth showed that 85 per cent of Victorians support the introduction of labels detailing health information on alcohol products.

Australian alcohol companies aren’t required to list ingredients on their products or display labels about the associated risk of disease or illness.

“There is no reason why alcohol, which is inherently harmful, is subject to less regulation in this regard than a carton of milk,” said Todd Harper, CEO VicHealth.

“The community wants the Government to make health information and labels mandatory rather than a voluntary system implemented by the alcohol industry,” said Mr Harper.

For media enquiries please contact Renee Lustman on 03 9278 8109 / 0430 948 380.

The Australian Drug Foundation and VicHealth share concern relating to the misuse of alcohol and its health/social impacts on the community. Alcohol remains one of the major causes of preventable death and illness in Australia. As such, we advocate for evidence based policy to prevent and reduce the harms caused by alcohol to Australians.