



# Health Advisory Labels on Alcoholic Beverages

International FASD Awareness Day

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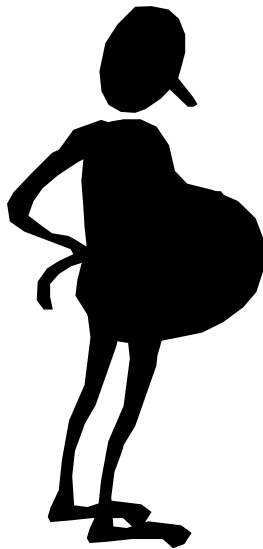


# Overview

- Labelling around the world
- FSANZ Application: Labelling of Alcoholic Beverages with a Pregnancy Health Advisory Label
  - Progress
  - Submitter comments
  - Effectiveness of Labelling
  - Next Steps
- Australian National Binge Drinking Strategy



# Labelling around the world...





# USA

- Labelling required since 1989

**According to the surgeon general, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects.**

**Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems.**



## Canada

- Labelling considered but no requirement
- Licensed establishments in Ontario required to display specific warning signs about the risk of alcohol use in pregnancy (2005)





# European Union

- No requirement for EU-wide labelling
- Individual countries have considered labelling
  - France - YES
  - Finland, Germany - NO



# France

- All alcoholic beverage containers required to have at least one of two health messages (Oct 07)
  - Statement indicating that consuming alcoholic beverages during pregnancy, even in small quantities, can have serious effects on the health of the child
  - Logo





## UK

- No labelling requirement
- Govt has voluntary agreement with industry to include sensible drinking information for pregnant women on labels as part of an overall sensible drinking message







- UK survey of labels collected in March 2008 indicates 17.9% (adjusted for market share) of labels contained pregnancy information
- 13.1% of labels had the French logo, 2.2% had recommended wording ‘Avoid alcohol if pregnant or trying to conceive’, 2.6% statements not compliant with recommendations.



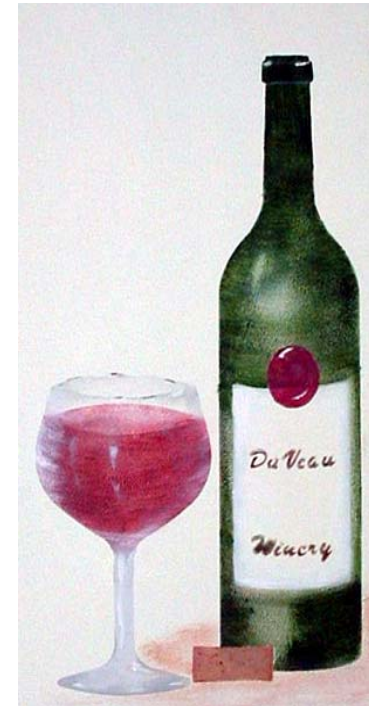
# Ireland

- Drink Manufacturers Ireland agreed to introduce a health warning (French logo and/or statement) (Dec 07)
  - Apply to all alcohol containers
  - Legislation needed to give effect to the agreement



## South Africa

- ‘drinking during pregnancy can be harmful to your baby’  
required on containers





# Voluntary labelling

- Distilled Spirits  
Industry Council of  
Australia

Is your drinking harming yourself or others?

- statement on: Jim Beam,  
Smirnoff, Canadian Club  
RTDs
- start October 2009





# Voluntary labelling

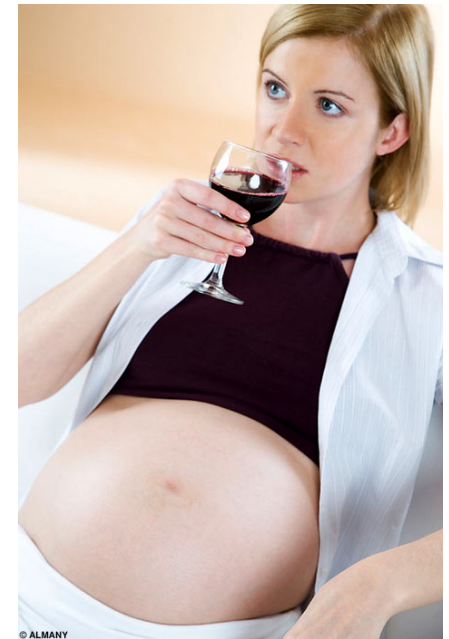
- Heineken (Enjoy Heineken Responsibly)
- Lion Nathan (Be Drink Aware)
- Diageo (DRINKiQ)
- Pernod Ricard  
(Responsible consumption:  
Supports use of French logo  
throughout Europe)





## **A576: Labelling of Alcoholic Beverages with a Pregnancy Health Advisory Label**

- Application made by the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand in February 2006
- Request for mandatory statement relating to the risk of drinking alcohol when planning to become pregnant and during pregnancy on alcoholic beverage containers





## **A576: Labelling of Alcoholic Beverages ....(cont)**

- Applicant stated: ‘there is good evidence to show that health advisory statements would complement and enhance national strategies to raise awareness of the potential dangers of consuming alcohol when planning to become pregnant or during pregnancy’.
- Actual wording or format of health advisory label was not proposed.



## A576 - Progress

- Initial Assessment Report released for public consultation (Dec 07)
- IAR set out approach to be taken:
  - risk assessment
  - risk management options
  - benefit-cost analysis
  - trade issues





## A576 – Progress cont.

- Risk assessment:
  - Impact of alcohol on foetus and child development
  - Prevalence of FASD in NZ and Australia
  - Alcohol consumption of women of childbearing age & pregnant women
  - Womens’ awareness of the risk
- Commissioned review on the effectiveness of labelling



**Submissions  
to the  
Initial Assessment Report**



	<b>Australia</b>	<b>NZ</b>	<b>Internatl</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Industry</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Consumers</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>52</b>
<b>Public Health</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>28</b>
<b>Govt/Acad</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>9</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>99</b>



# Submitter Views

- Harm from alcohol consumption
  - Risks associated with alcohol consumption are well recognized by the scientific community
  - Governments have a duty to care for health of its citizens and should not be compromised by commercial interests
  - Alcohol consumption is increasing amongst women of child-bearing age
  - Impact of FASD on society is substantial



## Submitter Views

- Scientific evidence is inconclusive in terms of the amount of alcohol that causes harm
- Incidence of FASD in NZ/Australia is unknown
- Focus should not be on problems which are prevalent only in a minority of the population



# Submitter Views

- Provision of information
  - Consumers have a right to know, want to know, need to be aware, expect to be informed of risks
  - Label can inform, remind and reinforce health promotion
  - Consumers lack knowledge about the link between alcohol consumption and fetal damage through lack of information, inconsistent messages and/or misinformation



## Submitter Views

- Ineffectiveness of labelling
  - Labelling has little impact on behaviour
  - Studies show pregnant women have a high degree of knowledge about the risks
  - Half of pregnancies are unplanned therefore labels would not be appropriate



## Submitter Views

- Ineffectiveness of labelling (cont.)
  - Labelling may be counter-productive as could raise unnecessary alarm
  - High proportion of alcoholic drinks are served in situations where the label is not seen
  - Mandatory labels have been rejected in some countries and effectiveness still being debated in countries where there is labelling





## Submitter Views

- Labelling as part of broader strategy
  - Labelling is needed as one prevention strategy (within a broader strategy)
  - Labelling is needed irrespective of whether there are other education strategies (teratogen)
  - Labelling is the platform for other strategies



## Submitter Views

- Implementation and consistency
  - Labelling is relatively easy to implement and inexpensive
  - Labelling would provide an approach consistent with other products known to have health risks
    - tobacco, allergens, pharmaceutical products
  - Label would provide consistency with other countries



## Submitter Views

- Re-labelling costs for industry (ongoing)
- Labelling is not necessarily the most cost effective approach in increasing awareness and causing behaviour change
- Labelling may distract authorities from the need to invest in more effective prevention programs



# Effectiveness of labelling

- Commissioned a review on the effectiveness of labelling about the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy

# Effectiveness of labelling (cont.)

- Majority of drinkers notice the label and can recall message (USA); increased conversations
- Evidence on impact of labels on awareness and alcohol consumption is limited
- Health communication models suggest labels more likely to influence behaviour when included in comprehensive strategy
- Pregnant women may be more motivated to change behaviour



# Effectiveness of labelling (cont.)

- Review noted:
  - Limited number of studies, lack of robust methodology
  - Most studies are from the USA
  - Difficult to separate impact of labels from other strategies.



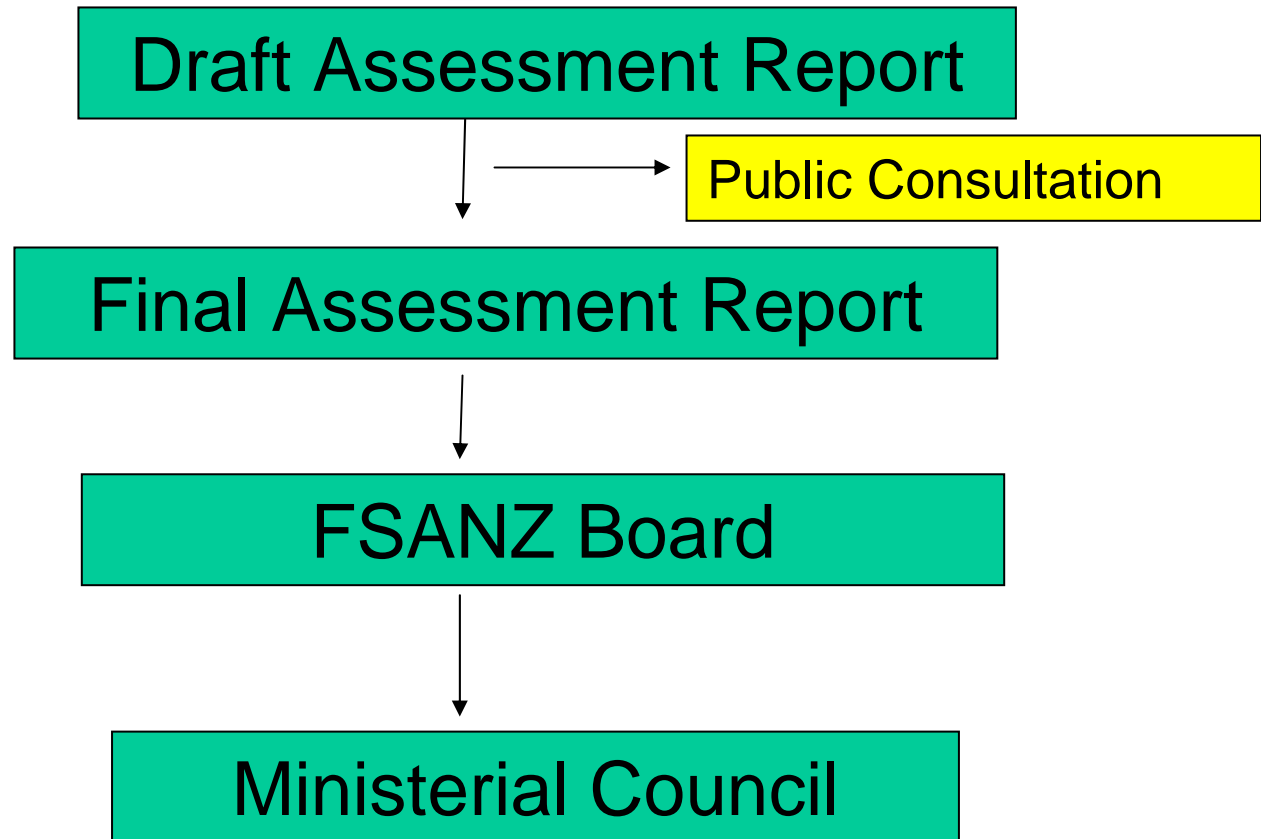
## A576 – next steps

- Cost-effectiveness study underway
  - For any new regulatory measure FSANZ is required to demonstrate a net benefit to the community
  - Comparing mandatory labelling with other strategies
- All information will be used to inform our recommended regulatory approach for A576
- ???Research on label statement



# Next Steps

## FSANZ process - Applications





# Australian National Binge Drinking Strategy

- Food Regulation Ministerial Council asked FSANZ to consider mandatory health warnings on packaged alcohol (May 08)
- Commissioned review – Ministerial Council May 09
- Consideration of health warnings will form part of the broader National Binge Drinking Strategy to be considered by COAG later this year
- Any further work dependent on advice from the Ministerial Council.



For more information:

## A576 Interested Party List

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