



**Media release, 16 December 2011**

**Pregnancy warning on alcohol products**

Alcohol Healthwatch is pleased that, after more than a decade of dithering, there will finally be a pregnancy warning on all alcohol products in Australia and New Zealand.

The Australian and New Zealand Ministerial Council on Food Regulation have met to consider a response to the recommendations of the independent Food Policy and Labelling Review that was released earlier this year. At the Melbourne meeting last week, a decision was made to introduce “appropriate labelling” about the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. This labelling will be regulated in two years’ time.

Alcohol Healthwatch Director Rebecca Williams says her organisation is looking forward to working with the Government and public health experts to develop an effective warning. Recently, some within the liquor industry had moved to introduce a voluntary label. However Ms Williams says the image they selected for the rear label of the bottle is so tiny and indistinct that it is difficult to notice even when a person is prompted to look for it.

“We want to ensure that ‘appropriate’ labelling translates into a clear, research-based health warning that is far more effective than the ineffectual approach taken by the alcohol industry.”

The decision to not proceed with a health warning for other alcohol-related risks is disappointing to say the least, says Ms Williams.

“To not inform consumers that alcohol causes cancer, or increases the risk of injury or addiction, for instance, is a missed opportunity and one that would have supported health professionals in the delivery of important information.

“We hope to see further action taken by Government to develop warning labels outlining other important consumer information sooner rather than later.”

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