

Regulating alcohol pregnancy warning labels

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**STOPPING
HARM
CAUSED BY
ALCOHOL**

Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education



BREAKING: Ministers agree to mandatory pregnancy warning labels

11 Oct 2018 the Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation voted to mandate pregnancy warning labels on all packaged alcohol

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) will develop an independent, effective, consumer-tested labelling standard



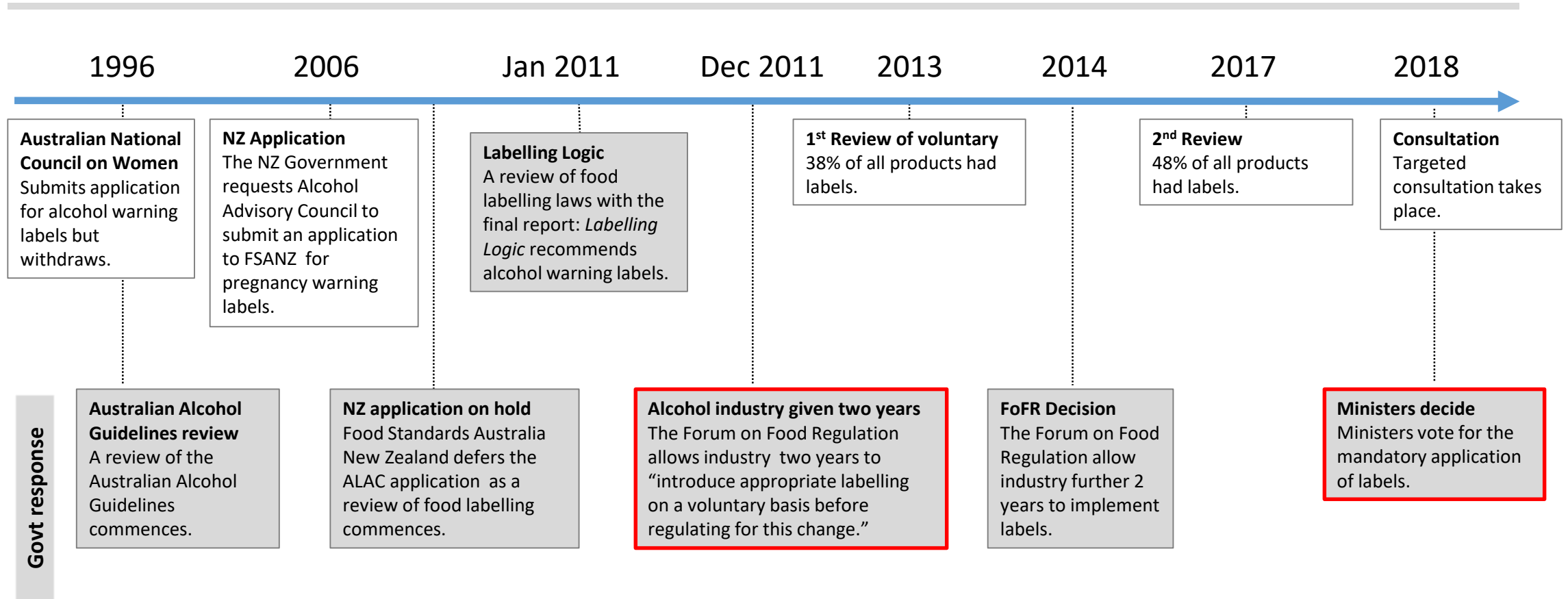
Alcohol is a teratogen, but exempt from labelling requirements

Other teratogens are:

- Completely banned from consumable products
- Illegal
- Used when there is no alternative and under medical supervision (i.e. x-rays in pregnancy, controlled prescriptions)
- Carry a warning label on the packaging



Process for mandatory alcohol pregnancy labels is LONG!



The current Australian and New Zealand alcohol industry labels are weak and ambiguous

Cheers.org.nz



Standard Drinks



DrinkWise.



Comparison with medications:



What is wrong with the current industry labels?

- Labels are too small for consumers to find
- Mislead consumers by co-locating them next to ‘drink responsibly’ or ‘enjoy in moderation’
- Hidden – don’t stand out from other text
- Use labels from other countries
- Link to an industry website for health information
- Not informed by consumer testing.



What do consumers think of the current labels?

“Gentle advice... not a good idea to take the risk to drink.”

Pregnant/trying to conceive,
aged 25-45
higher education

“It’s not very clear, it’s almost saying you can still do it, but it’s probably not the best thing to do.”

Pregnant/trying to conceive, aged
25-45, lower education

“Sounds like it’s from the people selling the alcohol. It sounds duplicitous.”

Male partner,
aged 25-45, lower education

“It makes me think that some level of drinking is actually OK.”

Male partner, aged 20-45,
lower education



Alternative pictograms



Alternative warning text:

Current text: It is safest not to drink when pregnant		
During pregnancy no amount of alcohol is safe	Do not drink when pregnant	Alcohol causes birth defects, do not drink when pregnant
Drinking any alcohol can harm your unborn baby	Even small amounts can harm your unborn baby	Do not drink if pregnant, alcohol causes birth defects
This product should not be used when pregnant or breastfeeding	Warning: Do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding	Not recommended for children, pregnant or lactating women

Suggested label



WARNING

Any amount of alcohol may harm your unborn baby

How stakeholders helped get this across the line:

- Met with politicians
- Wrote to politicians – 280 letters sent in Oct
- Alerted and updated support networks
- Collaborated with other public health stakeholders to ensure consistency of key messages
- Promoted evidence-based research regarding current labelling ineffectiveness
- Promoted a viable alternative
- Utilised social media opportunities



How we influenced policy:

- Audit of products in 2012 and 2013 – 6% and 26% with labels
- Wrote to and met with Ministers outlining issues with current labels, tried different messages
- Commissioned focus group research to understand how consumers interpret the labels
- Coordinated public health responses
- Countered industry myths and tactics on the issue
- Emailed all politicians in Australia and New Zealand.



Victory achieved: Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation agreed

“That, based on the evidence, a mandatory labelling standard for pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages should be developed and should include a pictogram and relevant warning statement.

The Forum requested Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) develop this mandatory labelling standard as a priority and that the work be completed expeditiously.”

FOFR FINAL COMMUNIQUE OCT 11

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND MINISTERIAL FORUM ON FOOD REGULATION

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

11 October 2018

The Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum) met today to consider a range of food regulation matters. The Forum comprises all Australian and New Zealand Ministers responsible for food regulation, and the Australian Local Government Association and is chaired by Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie. The Forum oversees the collaborative joint Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation System.

Key outcomes from the meeting include:

PREGNANCY WARNING LABELS ON PACKAGED ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Government advice in Australia and New Zealand is that pregnant women do not consume any alcohol. If a baby is exposed to alcohol in the womb it can have irreversible impacts such as intellectual, behavioural and developmental disabilities. The Forum recognised that Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a life-long disability which can be prevented if pregnant women do not consume alcohol.

Pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages can raise awareness and prompt discussions about the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy and may also support the establishment of cultural norms in relation to pregnant women not drinking alcohol. The alcohol industry has applied pregnancy warning labels to packaged alcoholic beverages on a voluntary basis since late 2011.

But... work continues and we need you to be involved

- Public consultation between March – April 2019
 - standards.management@foodstandards.gov.au
- Sign up to:
 - FARE: www.fare.org.au @FAREAustralia
 - Alcohol Healthwatch: www.ahw.org.nz @AlcHealthwatch
- Keep your network/stakeholders up-to-date
- Read the Decision Regulatory Impact Statement
- Advocate for expedient consistent compliance and accompanying public awareness



Join the #NotGoodEnough campaign

- Open the QR Code reader or camera on your phone.
- Hold your device over the QR Code so that it's clearly visible within your smartphone's screen.



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