

MEDIA RELEASE

RESEARCH SHOWS INDUSTRY REGULATED ALCOHOL LABELS WON'T WORK

30 November 2011: Market research has overwhelmingly rejected the alcohol health warning labels recently launched by the Australian alcohol industry in favour of informative, clear and specific labels produced by the Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education (FARE).

Across all categories, the alcohol industry's labels were dismissed in preference for the FARE labels:

- 95% selected the FARE health warning labels as being **more noticeable**.
- 89% believed the FARE health warning labels are more likely to **raise awareness of alcohol-related harms**.
- 88% felt the FARE health warning labels would be **more likely to prompt conversations about alcohol-related harms**.
- 88% believed the FARE warning labels would be **more likely to result in people drinking less alcohol**.
- 60% selected the FARE labels as **telling them something they did not already know** while only 10% selected the DrinkWise labels.

Michael Thorn, Chief Executive of FARE said, "This demonstrates that warning labels have to be clear, contain specific health messages and prominently placed on alcohol products. The research is an indictment of the industry's weak approach to alcohol labelling and their inability to prioritise the health of Australians."

"It is not in the alcohol industry's interest for health warning labels to change behavior and reduce consumption. Yet time and time again, the Government turns to the industry to implement vital public health policy."

"Implementing health warning labels combined with strong public education campaigns has the potential to reduce alcohol-related harms by educating Australians about the long term harms of risky drinking. Once again, the industry has demonstrated that it will not take self regulation seriously."

FARE calls on the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council to agree to the introduction of mandatory health warning labels, starting with a pregnancy warning label and to rule out any industry led system.

"Pregnancy health warning labels are an important first step in raising awareness of the harms of consuming alcohol during pregnancy," said Mr Thorn.

"FARE is disappointed that the Commonwealth Government has chosen not to support the Blewett Review recommendation for mandatory pregnancy labels, instead opting for self regulation. We condemn their position as out of step with public sentiment, which clearly supports the introduction of mandatory pregnancy warning labels on alcohol products."

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are the most common, preventable cause of birth defects and brain damage in children.

“FASD is a devastating, irreversible condition that affects too many families across Australia. Health warning labels are one way to increase awareness about not drinking alcohol during pregnancy.”

“Without mandatory enforcement, industry has shown time and time again that it will not comply with labelling requirements. The United Kingdom is a simple example where after one year, only 3% of alcohol labels had the five key elements for alcohol labelling that the Government suggested¹.”

“This is too important an issue to leave in the hands of the Australian alcohol industry.”

Commissioned by FARE, the independent poll, conducted by Galaxy Research, surveyed 504 people who were shown the FARE and industry alcohol health labels and asked to select the most superior against a set of criteria including: noticeability, comprehensibility of the message, capacity to raise awareness and prompt conversations about alcohol-related harms, and impact on alcohol consumption.

– Ends –

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Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education (FARE): FARE – formerly the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation - is an independent, charitable organisation working to prevent the harmful use of alcohol in Australia. Since 2001, FARE has invested over \$115 million in research and community projects to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse on Australians. Through our national grants program and commissioned research, the FARE has established itself as a leading voice on alcohol and other drugs issues. We work with community groups, all levels of government, police, emergency workers, research institutions and the private sector to address alcohol-related problems. For further information visit our website: www.fare.org.au

¹ Campden & Chorleywood Food Research Association Group (2008). Monitoring Implementation of Alcohol Labelling Regime (including advice to women on alcohol and pregnancy). Conducted on behalf of Department of Health.