

From: P & N Gurrier-Jones
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Standards Management Officer,
FSANZ,
P.O.Box 7186,
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2610

Dear Sir/Mme,

Thankyou for this opportunity to support the Application A576 to require a health advisory label on alcoholic beverage containers, advising of the risks of consuming alcohol when planning to become pregnant, and during pregnancy.

We have personal experience of a case where parents had the trauma of caring for their child who was born brain damaged through the mother drinking alcohol during pregnancy. This led to the eventual break down of their marriage & the mother caring for the disabled child on her own.

It is alarming to be made aware how widespread yet hidden such problems are & how detrimental they are to our society as the following paragraphs bear out.

According to the *Daily Telegraph* (4/1/07, exclusive by Clare Masters), reported cases of infants born with FAS have more than doubled in NSW from 15 in 2001 to 32 in 2004, and the real figure is much higher. The FAS National Workshop Report (2002) points out that the "difficulties in assessing the true incidence of FAS and related disorders in Australia are due to patchy and variable data collection .. ad hoc and **under-reporting**, difficulty of diagnosis at birth .. reluctance of some health professionals to make diagnosis, lack of training of health professionals in identifying FAS, and lack of data links between prenatal services, outreach services and drug and alcohol services." APSU data also understate the incidence, because they "cover only paediatricians, who see referrals only" (p.16)

University of Sydney's Professor of Paediatrics Health Dr Elizabeth Elliot has said: "For every child with FAS there are 10 more with neuro-developmental problems caused by alcohol. We are certainly seeing new cases diagnosed every year and that is just the severe end of the spectrum. We also know many women are unaware a single binge early in pregnancy could damage their foetus."

This damage from even one bout of binge drinking during pregnancy can cause foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), leaving a child with behavioural and

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learning disabilities. Professor Ann Streissguth and other researchers have found that these disabilities last a lifetime, and often result in criminal and other anti-social activity, because the sufferers are not diagnosed till too late.

The Draft NHMRC Guidelines show that NO amount of alcohol during or before pregnancy is safe for the unborn child, and a rotating series of labels, as graphic as those used on tobacco packets, should be designed to deter consumption. Our nation cannot afford this waste of human potential.

Sometimes it is argued that such graphic labelling may cause pregnant women to do themselves or their unborn child harm when they read warning labels after drinking alcohol. If this is a real problem it should surely be overcome by the Australian & New Zealand Government making it mandatory to place large warning signs at alcohol outlets & by providing for education programmes in schools warning against the dangers to unborn children of women drinking alcohol when pregnant.

Yours sincerely,

per P. Gurrier-Jones

Paul & Noelene Gurrier- Jones

(postal/email address and phone/fax number as above)