

Proposal P1050 – Submission Template

Please use the template below to provide your submission to Proposal P1050 – Pregnancy warning labels on alcoholic beverages. Please submit this to FSANZ as a word document (if required, a pdf of the submission may also be provided in addition to the word document).

For information about making a submission, including what your submission should include, visit the FSANZ website at [information for submitters](#).

Submission to Proposal P1050 – Pregnancy warning labels on alcoholic beverages

A. Name and contact details (position, address, telephone number, and email address):

WellSouth Primary Health Network

333 Princes Street, Level 1
Dunedin 9016

B. For organisations, the level at which the submission was authorised:

Team Leader of Health Promotion

C. Summary (optional but recommended if the submission is lengthy):

Comments to specified sections of P1050 Call for Submissions (CFS) report:

D. Literature review on the effectiveness of warning labels (section 3.1.1 of CFS)

WellSouth supports the literature review process undertaken, and accepts the findings detailing the effectiveness of the identified aspects of warning labels in consideration with the limitations of existing relevant evidence. WellSouth agrees that the desired impact on behaviour change regarding alcohol consumption during pregnancy requires a multi-faceted approach of which pregnancy warning labels on alcoholic beverage packaging is one important strand.

E. Consumer testing of warning statements (section 3.1.2)

WellSouth accepts the consumer testing of warning statements process as outlined in the CFS and the key identified target groups of women and those in the proximal pregnant category. We support the testing of identified words (such as *any amount* and *lifelong*) to gauge potential influence exerted, and inclusion of the current voluntary *It's safest not to drink while pregnant* statement as a baseline measure for evaluating the other potential statements against. We agree that this statement should not be considered beyond this due to misinterpretations it can cause that contradict public health advice in both Australia and New Zealand.

F. Pictogram (section 3.2.2.2)

WellSouth supports the proposed pictogram and the prescribed elements to be used as part of the pregnancy warning label (PWL). The proposed pictogram maintains consistency with existing familiarity and association of similar images that clearly convey *don't drink alcohol when pregnant* messaging. We consider the pictogram to be an important element of the proposed label as it has a greater ability to convey the intended message amongst those with literacy or language barriers, where text may not be understood to the same extent.

Use of the colour red for the outer circle and strikethrough is consistent and aligns with widely recognised universal symbolism conveying prohibition (e.g. *stop* or *do not use*) messages such as *no smoking*. The colour red is also widely associated with warnings and danger that can condition attention to be drawn to the message. Furthermore, use of red for these pictorial elements provides contrast to more clearly distinguish the silhouette of the pregnant figure from the strikethrough, serving to enhance the intended message. Use of a red circle and strikethrough will also provide separation and distinction from the current voluntary labelling initiative which doesn't clearly convey the message to not drink alcohol during pregnancy.

G. Warning statement (section 3.2.2.3)

In the first instance, WellSouth would prefer the warning statement *Any amount of alcohol can cause lifelong harm to your baby* to be used alongside the proposed pictogram in the implementation of a mandatory PWL. This warning statement references the wording *lifelong harm* and is the only statement to clearly articulate that harms resulting from in-utero alcohol exposure are permanent and persist throughout life. Therefore, *Any amount of alcohol can cause lifelong harm to your baby* is the only statement explicitly reflecting the magnitude of the potential harms (e.g. FASD), the effects of which go beyond the individual to impact on families, whānau and communities. Furthermore, *Any amount of alcohol can cause lifelong harm to your baby* was clearly identified in supporting documents of the CFS as being the best overall statement at conveying the desired message *to not drink any alcohol during pregnancy*, selected by each group whether by gender, country or proximity to pregnancy.

However, WellSouth accepts the rationale, based on consideration of the principles identified to enhance consumer understanding, for selecting *Any amount of alcohol can harm your baby* as the warning statement proposed for use. While this statement does not convey the lifelong impact of alcohol harm as strongly as our preferred statement, we acknowledge that this statement still performed strongly in articulating the key message and is advantageous in that it is a shorter, less wordy statement. We agree that for any statement to be effective in purpose it needs to draw the attention of and be noticed by the intended audience.

H. Design labelling elements (section 3.2.2.4)

WellSouth is broadly supportive of the proposed design labelling elements concerning signal words, label size, location and orientation, and colour and contrast. However, WellSouth would support a requirement for the signal words *health warning* (in 6-point font size as prescribed in the proposal) to be included alongside the pictogram for alcoholic beverage volumes of ≤ 200ml. While there are comparatively fewer alcoholic beverages sold in volumes of ≤ 200mls, they are likely to be perceived and consumed as *one drink* or *one serving* by an individual, despite containing in excess of one standard drink. For example, a 187ml or 200ml bottle of sparkling wine purchased individually at a function can contain two standard drinks depending on %ABV. Given that a proportion of pregnancies in both Australia and New Zealand every year are unplanned, the inclusion of the signal words alongside the pictogram can enhance attention and notice given to the pictogram by those who may not relate to (but are still at risk of) *pregnancy* as depicted. This would also support the secondary objective of the DRIS of

providing information to the broader community. While WellSouth would support warning label location to be prescribed for *front-of-pack* positioning in the first instance, we are pragmatic about the need to balance proposed requirements with industry impacts and accept the decision not to regulate position. However, we strongly advocate for the positioning to be sufficiently distinct and separate from the current voluntary DrinkWise or Cheers labelling that conveys *drink responsibly* messaging as opposed to *don't drink alcohol during pregnancy* which is the basis of this proposal.

I. Summary of proposed pregnancy warning label design (section 3.2.2.5)

WellSouth is broadly supportive of the summary of proposed PWL designs detailed in Tables 9 and 10 in the CFS, in conjunction with our suggestion as outlined in our response above in Section H comments (requirement for the signal wording to be included alongside the pictogram for alcoholic beverage volumes of $\leq 200\text{mls}$).

J. Beverages to carry the pregnancy warning label (section 3.2.3)

WellSouth supports Option 2 (beverages containing 0.5% ABV or more) as this option is more consistent with public health advice in both Australia and New Zealand of *not to drink any alcohol during pregnancy*. This is relevant given the increase in brewed soft-drink products (such as kombucha) now available in a wide range of retail outlets and venues in our communities, coupled with the marketing of these products as being beneficial for health. Option 2 would better allow pregnant women, and the wider community, to make an informed choice when choosing what could be considered a *non-alcoholic drink* option in accordance with public health advice. While we support Option 2, we acknowledge the complexities and challenges for industry stakeholders, the scope of Proposal P1050 and the potential for consumer confusion regarding *alcoholic vs brewed soft drinks*. On this basis we accept the proposal for Option 1 (beverages containing more than 1.15% ABV).

K. Application to different types of sales (section 3.2.4)

WellSouth supports the proposed approach as detailed in Table 11 in the CFS. We agree that the changes from the current Code requirements will result in minimal additional impact on industry when considering common labelling and packaging processes already in practice.

L. Application to different types of packages (section 3.2.5)

WellSouth supports the proposed applications of the PWL to different types of packages. This proposed approach ensures consistency and clearly articulates the primary objective of the DRIS at both the *point of sale* and the *potential point of consumption*.

M. Consideration of costs and benefits (section 3.4.1.1 of CFS)

WellSouth accepts the process as detailed in the CFS for the consideration of costs and benefits of the PWL proposal. We acknowledge that there will be costs to the industry for the required labelling changes, however, we agree that the evidence-informed conclusion that preventing only a small proportion of cases of FASD will offset these costs provides enough justification for doing so, providing a greater net benefit to the community.

N. Transitional arrangements (section 4.1 of CFS)

As WellSouth is focused on improving health outcomes, we would like the intended audience and wider communities to benefit from exposure to the PWL sooner rather than later. However, we understand and accept the practical implications for industry regarding labelling changes and stock losses, and therefore WellSouth accepts the proposed two-year transitional arrangement detailed in the CFS.

O. Draft variation to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Attachment A of CFS)

WellSouth has no specific comment.

P. Other comments (within the scope of P1050 – see section 1.5 of the CFS)

WellSouth has no specific comment.