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Secretariat
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
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Submission to Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs 'Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder'. This submission focuses on two key topics that VicHealth has recently supported. The first being the need for further research to provide better evidence about the effects of low and moderate alcohol exposure during pregnancy. Research to date lacks clarity regarding the relationship between low to moderate alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Further research will help inform the development of the guidelines used by health professionals when providing advice to pregnant women. The second is the need for alcohol product labelling which warn consumers of the dangers of drinking during pregnancy.

In 2009/10 VicHealth provided the initial funding support to the Murdoch Children's Research Institute who, in collaboration with experts, are preparing to conduct a longitudinal study of pregnant women and their babies to help define alcohol exposure levels and its effect on Foetal Spectrum Alcohol Disorder (FASD). The evidence gained from the study will better inform both women and men of the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Attachment 1 outlines this research and the outcomes they are working towards.

VicHealth commissioned a survey (2009) with regards to the support for mandatory labelling on alcohol products. 91 per cent of people surveyed supported health warnings for specific groups such as pregnant women. Attachment 2 provides further details of this work. VicHealth believes that health advisory labels on all alcohol products will help better inform consumers and help prevent harms such as FASD.

Patrons
Sir James Gobbo
Dr Nigel Gray AO
Professor Emeritus,
Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE

In summary, VicHealth urges the Committee to: (1) support further research into the effects of low and moderate alcohol exposure during pregnancy to provide new evidence that will contribute to policy review and development; and (2) support the introduction of health warning labels on alcohol products.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Jerril Rechter
Chief Executive Officer
VicHealth

Attachment 1 - Asking Questions about Alcohol during pregnancy

Attachment 2 - Alcohol health information labels: research report

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