

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000373

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Alcohol and other Drugs

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

Is there any Government advertising or education campaigns that address public understanding of unsafe drinking and the harms of excess alcohol use, especially for pregnant women at risk of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder [FASD]?

Answer:

The Australian Government is currently reviewing the Australian Guidelines to Reduce the Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and will consider ways in which the public might be informed about the guidelines once the review is completed later in 2017.

In relation to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), the Australian Government supported the *Women Want to Know* project in 2013-14, which developed resources and training materials for GPs and Midwives to have discussions with women about their alcohol consumption, in particular during pregnancy, and to deliver a consistent message that no alcohol is the safest option during pregnancy, while breastfeeding and when planning for a pregnancy.

These resources and messages collectively target pregnant women and women of child bearing age.

The Australian Government has also engaged the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) in April 2017, to review and further promote the *Women Want to Know* resources. FARE will also expand the ACT based Pregnant Pause campaign to other states. Pregnant Pause encourages the partners and friends of pregnant women to abstain from alcohol for the nine months, as a show of support for pregnant women abstaining from alcohol. Both projects have commenced and will be progressed over the next 12 months with final reports and outcomes due in April 2018.

In December 2016 a roundtable of FASD experts and stakeholders reiterated the importance of prevention. The Government is continuing to work with stakeholders to identify further opportunities to promote the importance of not consuming alcohol while pregnant and

awareness of FASD more broadly. This is underpinned by the expansion of FASD diagnostic services and community based education programs for those at high risk of having a FASD child through open and competitive grant funding.

A voluntary trial by the alcohol industry of pregnancy warning labels has been in place since early 2012. The trial was initially for two years and on 27 June 2014, the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation announced it had agreed to extend the existing trial for a further two years and would undertake a second review and evaluation in two years. The second evaluation process commenced in late 2016 and will report later in 2017. The aim of the voluntary labelling initiative is to give the message that the safest option for pregnant women is to not consume alcohol in pregnancy.