Question: E13-021

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Alcohol Labelling

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Crossin

Question:

What process is the Government following to develop the labelling standard for mandatory pregnancy warning labels? When will public health organisations and other stakeholders be consulted and will the standard be agreed before the 9 December 2013 deadline?

Answer:

On 14 June 2013, Food Regulation Ministers noted that the project to evaluate action taken by the alcohol industry in Australia in placing pregnancy warnings on alcohol products would commence shortly.

The Department of Health and Ageing is engaging an evaluator to undertake an independent evaluation of the Australian alcohol industry voluntary labelling initiative. The primary focus of this evaluation is to analyse the progress of the alcohol industry action towards implementing voluntary health warnings regarding the risks of drinking while pregnant on alcohol product labels. An interim report is due to the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum) by December 2013, and a final report by March 2014.

While it was agreed to await the outcome of this independent review, Food Regulation Ministers have asked Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to provide advice on the steps that would be required to regulate and have agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting as soon as the review report becomes available.

In developing a standard, FSANZ would follow established standards development procedures.

These procedures include extensive public consultation and a regulation impact statement that would include an assessment of the costs and benefits of a standard.

All standards proposed by FSANZ are carefully considered by the FSANZ Board, which is an independent body, before being submitted to the Forum for further consideration.