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Media Release

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Sheed salutes new alcohol pregnancy warning labelling

Independent Member for Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed has welcomed the decision by Food Standards Australia New Zealand to enforce visible pregnancy health labelling on all alcohol beverage containers warning against the dangers of drinking while pregnant.

“The research is very clear – any amount of alcohol consumed while pregnant can have a detrimental life-long impact on the unborn child. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) reportedly impacts five per cent of new-borns per year. This is unacceptable,” Ms Sheed said.

The Forum on Food Regulation (FOFR) Ministers met last Friday to decide on this important issue. More than 3700 community leaders and advocates and 150 organisations had called on the Food Forum Ministers to support a visible, red, white and black health warning on alcohol products.

“The concerns of the alcohol industry were considered, but the cost of requiring the implementation of this labelling paled compared to the social and economic impact of one in twenty babies suffering from FASD, according to Ms Sheed. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can cause brain damage in unborn babies and can also lead to a range of other birth and developmental problems. It is entirely preventable but there is insufficient education and knowledge about the prevention of it,” Ms Sheed said.

“Just recently, in the Victorian Parliament, I called for the introduction of such labelling. That we finally have a result is testament to the work of many hard-working individuals and groups across the country, including the patron of NOFASD Dame Quentin Bryce, and I salute them all.”

The vote to introduce the new labelling was a close call, Ms Sheed noted.

“I would particularly like to thank the Victorian Government for standing up to the Federal Government and those states that voted against this important change.

“A new label alone will not eliminate FASD in our communities. However, it is an important part of the required prevention and education approach. There is still a great deal of work to be done in order to support those vulnerable to FASD, but this is a step in the right direction. It says we put women and children first.”

ENDS

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