

Minimising Harm By
Maximising Prevention



DALGARNO INSTITUTE



**F.A.S.D AND THE IMPACT OF ALCOHOL
ADVERTISING:
PROTECTING THE UNBORN
(F.A.S.D DAY 9TH OF 9TH 2023)**

ORGANISATION INFO AND CONTACT



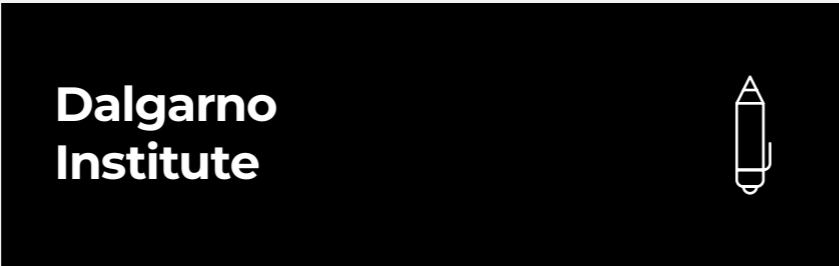
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The Impact of Alcohol Advertising: Protecting the Unborn



Table of Content

Introduction	04
The Loop of Influence: Alcohol Retailers and Delay Tactics	06
Blurring the Lines: Alcohol Advertising and Youth Appeal	08
A Continuing Call for Government Intervention	10
Putting Health First: Strengthening Advertising Standards	12
The Urgent Need for Action	14



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The introduction

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Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a preventable brain disease that can affect a child's lifelong health and well-being when a pregnant woman consumes alcohol.



Completely incurable – But totally preventable!

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy has long been recognized as a significant health concern due to its potential to cause severe developmental issues in foetuses. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a preventable brain disease that can affect a child's lifelong health and well-being when a pregnant woman consumes alcohol.

After years of lobbying from many prevention focused groups, not least Dalgarno Institute, for governments to address this pressing issue, the Australian government finally acquiesced, amidst continuing Big Alcohol pressure, to mandate the implementation of warning labels on alcoholic beverages to raise awareness about the dangers of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

However, a disturbing pattern is emerging where alcohol retailers are attempting to delay or circumvent these vital warnings. According to mandates agreed upon

([Food Standards ANZ](#)), as of 31st of July 2020, alcohol and pregnancy warning labels were supposed to be in play, at least on all packaged liquor, but clearly this is still far from done. 'Optional' recommendations of alternative requirements for pregnancy warning labels for corrugated cardboard outer packaging were also introduced on 4 May 2023. So, if the industry is still stalling on the mandatory, you can be rest assured, the 'opt in' recs will be stalled indefinitely.

This article delves into the issues surrounding toxic alcohol marketing and sales modes, particularly the delay tactics employed by alcohol retailers regarding warning labels related to pregnancy and the 'wild west' that is online sales and delivery.



It's no secret that the alcohol industry has played a significant role in shaping regulations and self-governance around alcohol advertising for decades. The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme has often been criticized for allowing the industry to self-regulate, which raises concerns about conflicts of interest. In this context, the recent actions of alcohol retailers like Endeavour Group, BWS, Dan Murphy's, Coles Group, and Liquorland in delaying the implementation of warning labels on alcohol products related to pregnancy cannot be taken lightly.

The proposed delay tactic involves permitting the sale of alcoholic beverages packaged and labelled before the transition period ends without the mandatory pregnancy warning labels. This delay's negative impact has only been amplified by now entrenched 'bottle shop in your pocket' phenomenon known as 'Fast Online Sales & Delivery' (O.S&D). The ostensibly unregulated movement at volume of unlabelled and highly promoted alcohol stock raises real concerns easier exposure to harms from vulnerable populations, including children, young, disadvantaged, isolation, dependant and not least pregnant demographics. The consequences of such actions have clear immediate harms, but dire long term consequences if leading to incurable Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders – FASD.



THE OSTENSIBLY UNREGULATED MOVEMENT AT VOLUME OF UNLABELLED AND HIGHLY PROMOTED ALCOHOL STOCK RAISES REAL CONCERNS EASIER EXPOSURE TO HARMS FROM **VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**, INCLUDING CHILDREN, YOUNG, DISADVANTAGED, ISOLATION, DEPENDANT **AND NOT LEAST PREGNANT DEMOGRAPHICS.**

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The proposed delay tactic involves permitting the sale of alcoholic beverages packaged and labelled before the transition period ends without the mandatory pregnancy warning labels.



The Loop of Influence: Alcohol Retailers and Delay Tactics

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Blurring the Lines: Alcohol Advertising and Youth Appeal



Some hard facts

Name:
Dalgarno Institute

Movement Commenced:
1844

Funding:
Not For Profit

Reach:
7000 Subscribers



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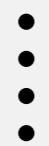
Youth Appeal and Serious Risk to Health

The recent launch of Asahi's Hard Solo®, an alcoholic version of its soft drink product, has sparked community concern about its appeal to children and young people.

This marketing tactic exploits the desire to engage young consumers, and when it comes to alcohol, it poses a serious risk to public health.

By blurring the distinction between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, the industry is essentially playing with fire, potentially exposing young minds to harmful substances...

02



Prevention Over Cure

One alarming trend in the alcohol industry is the creation of products that blur the lines between soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. The recent launch of Asahi's Hard Solo®, an alcoholic version of its soft drink product, has sparked community concern about its appeal to children and young people. This marketing tactic exploits the desire to engage young consumers, and when it comes to alcohol, it poses a serious risk to public health. (See [Peeling Back the Label - Alcohol Advertising and Young People](#))

The concern is not just about advertising that targets young people directly but also about how these products can inadvertently appeal to minors. By blurring the distinction between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, the industry is essentially playing with fire, potentially exposing young minds to harmful substances and setting the stage for early or even future unhealthy engagement with alcohol and the potential of addiction and growing health harms bring.

The issue of alcohol advertising and its impact on public health, especially in the context of pregnancy, demands more urgent and robust attention from the government. The current system of self-regulation by the industry is clearly inadequate and raises ethical questions about putting the foxes in charge of the hen house. The community's interests, especially the health and well-being of pregnant women and their unborn children, should take precedence over the demands of the addiction for profit alcohol industry.

The following is a summary of current evidence to support this stance:

1. [NOFASD Australia](https://www.nofasd.org.au/) <https://www.nofasd.org.au/>
2. [Isabellas List](https://www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au/index.php/advocacy/isabella-s-list) <https://www.dalgarnoinstitute.org.au/index.php/advocacy/isabella-s-list>
3. [PREVENTING FASD: HEALTHY WOMEN, HEALTHY BABIES](#) "Alcohol abuse is a serious public health concern. Did you know that alcohol can harm a fetus at any point in its development, often before a woman knows she's pregnant?"
4. [THE PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS](#) "Alcohol is a teratogen, a substance that can harm a fetus. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it passes through her blood and enters the fetus through the placenta. Its harmful effects may be seen in virtually every part of the fetus, including the brain, face, heart, liver, kidneys, eyes, ears, and bones. These effects can affect a person's health for a lifetime."



Some hard facts

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Name:
Dalgarno Institute

Movement Commenced:
1844

Funding:
Not For Profit

Reach:
Over 30 Programs

A Continuing Call for Government Intervention

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5. [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: An International Perspective](#) "Active case ascertainment undertaken in a school entry population of a farming community revealed the highest incidence of FAS thus far reported in the literature, at 46.4 per 1000 (May et al., 2000). This knowledge has helped this community create a significant FAS prevention campaign, with prevention activities targeted at three levels suggested by the Institute of Medicine (Stratton et al., 1996): "universal" interventions for the broad community, "selected" interventions for women in the high-risk agricultural sector, and "indicated" interventions for women drinking in a risky manner and women who have already given birth to a child with FAS."
6. [Effects of Paternal Exposure to Alcohol on Offspring Development](#) "How much alcohol must fathers drink to produce deficits in their offspring? Are the effects observed in the offspring of alcoholic exposed fathers transmitted from one generation to the next? Can these effects be reversed by long term abstinence of the father prior to conception?"
7. [EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON A FETUS](#) "Prenatal exposure to alcohol can damage a fetus at any time, causing problems that persist throughout the individual's life. There is no known safe level of alcohol use in pregnancy."
8. [Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016](#) "Alcohol use is a leading risk factor for global disease burden and

9. [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome - article attached How can fetal alcohol syndrome \(FAS\) be prevented?](#) "Using alcohol during pregnancy is the leading cause of preventable birth defects, developmental disabilities and learning disabilities. Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is a preventable condition. However, the only way to prevent FAS is to avoid drinking beverages containing alcohol during pregnancy. It's also recommended that you not drink alcohol if you're sexually active and not using effective birth control. It can take four to six weeks before you know you're pregnant. During early pregnancy, the fetus is already developing rapidly. Alcohol consumption could harm the developing fetus at any time during pregnancy - especially early on in the development process. If you've already consumed alcohol during pregnancy, it's never too late to stop. Brain growth in the fetus takes place throughout pregnancy, so stopping alcohol consumption as soon as possible is always best."

Putting Health First: Strengthening Advertising Standards



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To address these pressing concerns, there is a need for more robust advertising standards for alcohol products, particularly those related to pregnancy.

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Prevention
Over Cure

Focus: Delivering accurate information

At the very least, the focus should be on delivering accurate information, including clear warning labels, to consumers about the potential risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

To address these pressing concerns, there is a need for more robust advertising standards for alcohol products, particularly those related to pregnancy. The government must step in to further strengthen and administer these standards to ensure that public health is prioritized over corporate interests. At the very least, the focus should be on delivering accurate information, including clear warning labels, to consumers about the potential risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.



Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a preventable health issue that demands immediate action. The government must work collaboratively with health agencies, community organizations, and alcohol retailers to reinforce the importance of warning labels related to pregnancy. The evidence supporting the necessity of these labels is overwhelming, and the well-being of future generations should not be compromised due to delay tactics or profit-seeking agendas.

Whilst some state governments are playing 'catch-up' with the largely under-regulated OS&D sector, some states are moving legislation to tighten up this 'cowboy' sector of 'bottle shop in your pocket'. Victoria is leading the way with the only state to create a new license category – Remote Sellers License – to ensure at least similar RSA (Responsible Serving of Alcohol) standards that apply to bricks and mortar alcohol retailers apply to those 'delivering to your front door'. However, the backlog on this is huge, and this is only one state.

In conclusion, the issues surrounding alcohol advertising, particularly its impact on pregnancy, require the attention of policymakers, health organizations, and society at large. The delay tactics employed by alcohol retailers in avoiding warning labels related to pregnancy are concerning and must be addressed promptly. It's time for a comprehensive approach that prioritizes public health over industry interests and empowers consumers with accurate information to make informed choices about alcohol consumption during pregnancy. The well-being of our future generations depends on it.



The Urgent Need for Action

Recommendation 2.

FASD and Cancer Warning labels be mandatory on all packaged liquor – Now, no more delays. Products that do not have labels must not be sold.

Recommendation 3.

The clear, standardised, and regulated use of pregnancy and alcohol warning alerts in the OS&D sector be mandatory.

Recommendation 4.

Dalgarno Institute has both investigated and heard from retailers that when you access the Online retailer's website that ask you if you are over 18 years of age and they only request you to click yes or no if you are over 18 years. The websites also simply post A. Under the Liquor Control Act 1988 or B. Under the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 C. Liquor Regulation 2010 ACT it is an offence to sell Alcohol to those who are under 18 years of age, as if that is a sufficient scrutiny, which it clearly is not. Consistent anecdotal, and emerging investigative evidence is revealing this is not working in any metric. Consequently, significantly tighter controls are needed for Identification Checks.

Recommendation 5.

All current and even a more robust RSA protocol be applied in all alcohol delivery settings before product is delivered to the home.

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Recommendation 1.

Every actor involved in the promotion, sale, and delivery of alcohol away from licensed venues, must themselves be licensed to do so; including delivery drivers. Having 'piggy backing' off a Hotel license has created a loophole in responsibility and accountability. If each actor being licensed, then each actor is subject to all existing best practices around alcohol sales, including thorough RSA vetting and training, compliance checks and subsequent penalties for breaches. Of course, the process itself lends itself to easy breaches, but heavy penalties and regular random checks must be a part of that regime – particularly concerning the following.

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05

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Also see

- [Alcohol Marketing Position Statement – Alcohol Change Australia](#)
- [Delivering Harm, and Fast: The Wild West of Online Alcohol Sales & Delivery](#)
- [Social Media – An Alcohol Consumption Contagion](#)

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