

24 May, 2012

Winemakers outline position on FASD

The Winemakers' Federation of Australia today appeared before the Federal Government's *Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder* and reiterated its support for evidence-based initiatives designed to address FASD and other alcohol-related health and social issues.

Talking in support of WFA's written submission, the Federation's General Manager Policy & Government Affairs, Andrew Wilsmore, once again stated that the wine industry:

- shared community concern over the impact of FASD
- fully supported the NHMRC's recommendation that for women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding the safest option is not to drink alcohol.

WFA encourages winemakers to include the internationally-recognised "pregnant lady" pictogram on wine labels and is talking with the Government about expanding its voluntary activities.

However, Mr Wilsmore told the inquiry evidence clearly showed that warning or information labels were of little value if not supported by education campaigns and broader strategies to address attitudes towards alcohol.

It was hoped the current inquiry – the third to which WFA had made a submission in relation to similar issues in just over a year – would "provide much needed impetus in these areas".

"We support your committee bringing to higher attention the call from on-the-ground practitioners to concentrate efforts into secondary and tertiary prevention strategies," he said.

WFA's submission notes that research by a range of authorities, including the WHO Expert Committee on Problems with Alcohol Consumption, has shown that while warning labels may increase awareness they do not, in isolation, change behaviour.

"That has always been our argument and the focus of our discussions with government over a number of years," Mr Wilsmore said outside the inquiry.

"It is disgraceful that the Foundation for Alcohol Education & Research yesterday selectively quoted from our 21-page submission to try to support its claim that we are minimising the issue of FASD, don't care about pregnant women and don't want them to know the facts.

"That is exactly what we and industry colleagues do want. Let's use some of the millions of dollars of public money that are provided to health organisations to fund proper education campaigns that provide the facts in the most accessible way."

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