

**A1256 - Call for submissions**  
**Colour of pregnancy warning labels for corrugated cardboard packaging**

Submission by Public Health Services, Department of Health, Tasmania



16 November 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the call for submissions for Application A1256 – *Colour of pregnancy warning labels for corrugated cardboard packaging*.

Application A1256 seeks to permit pregnancy warning labels in corrugated cardboard (CC) packaging used for multiple individual units of alcohol beverages to be in a single colour on a contrasting background. This application was made by Brewers Association of New Zealand.

FSANZ proposed three options:

**Option 1:** Status quo – no change to requirements in Standard 2.7.1

**Option 2:** Amend Code requirements as requested by the applicant (pregnancy warning mark on CC packaging of more than one individual unit in a single colour on a contrasting background)

**Option 3:** Amend Code requirements as requested by the applicant with modifications to mitigate the loss of three prescribed colours.

Public Health Services remains committed to pregnancy warning labels on alcoholic beverages and supports Option 1 until further work is undertaken on this issue. Public Health Services does not support Option 2 and considers Option 3 does not go far enough in mitigating the loss of three prescribed colours.

As previously outlined by FSANZ in PI050 warning labels need a range of design features to be noticed, including colour, contrast and size. There is substantial evidence on the use of the colour red for a warning label as it not only attracts attention but conveys a warning more than the colour black.

The key issue being raised by this application is the misalignment of the pregnancy warning mark when three colours (black, red and white) are used with the post-printing process on CC packaging. Public Health Services would like additional information on the technical issues associated with printing on CC cardboard to make a more informed decision, including -

- examples of printing the warning labels at varying sizes to determine the degree of misalignment
- greater clarity on why there would be misalignment with the pregnancy warning labels (and in particular the pictogram) using the 'trapping approach' when using one colour.

The applicant indicated that one method to improve the misalignment of the pregnancy warning label on CC packaging would be to increase the size, however the applicant states that misalignment would not be completely resolved, and the size would need to be substantially larger for misalignment not to be obvious. Public Health Services seeks additional information on how much larger the warning label would need to be to reduce misalignment to make a more informed decision. A larger warning label on the outer packaging would be in proportion to the size of the box and therefore should not be a reason to not consider this option.

Public Health Services note that Industry who have included the pregnancy warning label on outer CC packaging have predominately placed this on the bottom of the pack where there is ample space to increase the size (Figure 1). Whilst this is not the ideal position for such a warning label, if this is the preferred location by Industry then there seems no reason why the size cannot be increased to reduce this misalignment. This would require only a minor amendment to the Code.

Another option proposed by the applicant was to place the pregnancy warning label in a single colour on a white background, however this approach was considered to have too many technical issues. It is not clear in the FSANZ report why the 'trapping' approach is not worth pursuing as this approach would remove the smudging issue that was raised by the first method. One of the issues raised with this second approach was that the pregnancy warning label would be misaligned and that it would be most noticeable in the pictogram. However, Public Health Services cannot see why this problem remains if the one colour is being used and would like further clarification on this.

FSANZ are proposing that the background of the pregnancy warning mark must be the same colour as the CC outside liner (kraft brown, recycled brown or grey or white) and the circle and strikethrough of the pictogram, and words must be in the colour black as well as a 25% increase in size. Whilst this is an improvement on what the applicant was requesting Public Health Services does not feel that the issues raised above have been explored in enough depth to come to a final decision.

Public Health Services requests further consideration of:

- Increasing the size of the pregnancy warning label to a size where misalignment is significantly reduced

- Using the 'trapping approach' with a white background and red pictogram and writing (ie only one colour).

Both these methods above will ensure the integrity of the pregnancy warning labels is maintained whilst also allowing the misalignment to be corrected.

If after further analysis these options are not viable Public Health Services requests that FSANZ explore front of pack labelling on CC packaging for Option 3. Option 3 as it stands does not meet the design features that were clearly articulated in P1050. With the removal of the colour red and other contrasting colours, visibility of the warning label is significantly reduced.

The applicant states that most CC packaging is removed prior to retail sale (estimate 8% of beer and cider, 9.5% of wine and 12.5% of pre-mixed drinks are in CC packaging at retail sale point) and therefore the proposed amendment would have a minor impact on consumer attention to the pregnancy warning mark. However, with the growing rise of on-line sales and the increase in alcohol retailers such as Woolworths Group, Coles Group, Aldi and IGA this may not be the case. Woolworths Group has the highest penetration among alcohol retailers with more than 60% of Australian alcohol buyers purchasing from its stores (Dan Murphy's, BWS, Cellarmasters and Woolworths Liquor). Visitation at a number of these outlets in Tasmania highlighted the dominant display of outer packaging within the stores which has the potential to impact on consumer attention to the pregnancy warning labels if key elements of the warning label are removed (see figure 2).

Public Health Services is not clear on how the regulators will be able to differentiate between the printing process as the current proposal is for the change to be only for CC using a post-print printing process. Figure 3 has a number of photos of CC packaging, but it is difficult to know which printing process has been used.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3a

Figure 3b



Figure 3c