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Tēnā kōrua An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill
A REQUEST TO CONSIDER PUBLIC HEALTH OUTCOMES OVER INDUSTRY CLAIMS

We write to you from Alcohol Healthwatch, a non-governmental organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ). We are focussed on reducing and preventing alcohol related harm through health promotion.

We follow Ireland's journey with alcohol warning labels with keen interest.

Ireland's staunch leadership in public health (for example, the ban on smoking in public places) has been inspirational for the public health community here in NZ and elsewhere.

Following Ireland's outstanding public health leadership, conversations about cancer warning labels are now occurring in Australia and New Zealand (see [here](#) and [here](#)). We are seeing the impact of Ireland's leadership throughout the global public health community.

In particular, your incoming requirement for the warning label has led one NZ wine brand (Villa Maria) implementing the label on their products bound for Ireland already, spurring media and public interest on the issue in NZ.

These conversations are likely a primary reason why [recent polling](#) of New Zealanders showed high levels of support (66%) for a cancer warning label. We expect this interest will increase should Ireland continue its leadership and implement the cancer warning label as planned.

Alcohol Healthwatch and other health agencies in NZ would caution putting too much weight on alcohol industry critiques of the policy, including claims that it would affect exports. Here in NZ, [we saw multiple attempts by the alcohol industry to derail pregnancy warning labels](#) – and they were successful in delaying the label requirement for over twenty years.

The alcohol industry uses delay tactics for many public health interventions. With pregnancy warning labels, this included first developing their own self-regulatory labelling scheme (this had low rates of compliance with 38% compliance in the first review two years after implementation, and only 48% compliance a further four years after the first review) and frequent objections around cost.

Industry attempts to water down the policy continue even after the pregnancy warning labels became mandatory. For example, an industry petition was made to allow corrugated cardboard packaging to not require a coloured warning label, which was approved. As well as this, there are no efforts from the industry to put label stickers on stock already manufactured, resulting in one-third of alcohol products missing the pregnancy warning label a year after being made mandatory.

We dearly hope our experience, and continuing efforts to maintain the integrity of our pregnancy warning label, provides a lens through which your current industry objections can be viewed.

Overall, we commend your courage, leadership and vision on this important issue. Ireland's example is instrumental for building the impetus to enact similar policies here, particularly with the similarities between our countries including population size and heavy burden from alcohol related harm.

We deeply value your leadership and encourage you to continue championing this important cause that will help to raise awareness and support informed choices, both in Ireland and globally.

Nāku noa, nā



Andrew Galloway
Executive Director