

DrinkWise.

MEDIA RELEASE

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SALLY PEARSON REMINDS MUMS-TO-BE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ABSTAINING FROM ALCOHOL

World and Olympic Champion and new mum, Sally Pearson, has partnered with DrinkWise to urge women to abstain from alcohol when planning a pregnancy, while pregnant and breastfeeding.

This partnership coincides with International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day on September 9th – and follows recent government findings that one in three (35%) women reported consuming alcohol while pregnant.*

Pearson, who gave birth to her first daughter Ruby two months ago, was a firm abstainer during pregnancy and has continued to abstain while breastfeeding. She is collaborating with DrinkWise to assist in raising awareness ahead of International FASD Awareness Day.

“As an expectant and new mum, the amount of time you spend researching *everything* is quite incredible. One thing I knew was that I shouldn’t and wouldn’t drink alcohol when pregnant, but I didn’t necessarily know the specifics of FASD,” said Pearson.

“Like many elements of motherhood, it’s so important that we all speak out more, support and educate each other on issues like FASD - and of course help to protect our beautiful, next generation. I’m delighted to help spread this important message this September,” added Pearson.

Associate Professor Luke Burchill, who specialises in caring for women with heart conditions during pregnancy, raised the need to further educate the community about the risks associated with consuming alcohol while pregnant.

“FASD is a preventable condition that is not just a concern for pregnant women, but for their partners and their families too, so it’s important all Australians know that there is no safe level of drinking alcohol during pregnancy,” said Dr Burchill.

“Prenatal exposure to alcohol can reduce the size and weight of the fetal brain. It can also directly damage regions of the brain that are critical for learning, memory, behaviour, language, problem solving and decision-making,” warned Dr Burchill.

DrinkWise CEO Simon Strahan acknowledged that while rates of abstinence were improving, as reported in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s (AIHW) recent National Drug Strategy Household Survey data, (from 40% in 2007 vs. 65% in 2019), there is a lot more to be done.

“It’s pleasing that more pregnant women are abstaining from alcohol, but we won’t be satisfied until that number is 100%,” said Strahan.

“This is why DrinkWise will continue community education programs that talk to the importance of not drinking alcohol if planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding.”

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

* Source: [AIHW, National Drug Household Strategy Survey 2020](#).

ABOUT DRINKWISE

DrinkWise is an evidence-based social change organisation dedicated to changing the Australian drinking culture to one that is safer and healthier. We do this through national education campaigns, partnerships with community leaders and organisations, and the development of practical strategies and resources that better support the community in relation to the responsible use of alcohol. DrinkWise is funded through voluntary industry contributions across the alcohol sector and has previously been in receipt of funding from both Coalition and Labor governments.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL FASD DAY

International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Day (FASD) is a global initiative designed to raise awareness about the dangers of drinking during pregnancy and the plight of individuals and families who are affected or have been impacted by the disorder. September 9th was chosen so that on the ninth day of the ninth month of the year, the world will remember that during the nine months of pregnancy a woman should abstain from alcohol.