

For Immediate Release

Community organisations welcome the Senate Inquiry report into FASD

18 March 2021: The final report from the Senate Community Affairs References Committee into *Effective approaches to prevention and diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)* was handed down on Wednesday afternoon.

The report included 32 recommendations covering the prevention, diagnosis, and management of FASD.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and National Organisation of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (NOFASD) welcomed the report and its comprehensive recommendations.

“FASD is a lifelong disability that impacts on the brain and body of people exposed to alcohol during pregnancy. We welcome the Committee’s recommendations, which include actions to prevent FASD in Australia and ensure that people with FASD, their parents and carers have access to the support they need throughout their lives,” said Ms Sophie Harrington, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of NOFASD.

The key recommendations arising from the report include the need to:

- improve data collection on FASD, including a national prevalence study and research into the cost of FASD in Australia
- introduce Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Items that cover the range of clinical practices involved in FASD assessments, diagnoses and treatments
- include FASD in the Australian Government list of recognised disabilities
- screen children and young people within child protection and youth justice systems for FASD
- engage with First Nation organisations to improve access to National Disability Insurance Scheme for people in remote Australia and the development of community-led projects to prevent and manage FASD.

The report also recommends the need for reforms to address the broader culture of alcohol that contributes to higher-risk alcohol use, including the introduction of marketing, pricing and taxation reforms set out in the National Alcohol Strategy.

“The Committee has acknowledged the need for FASD to be recognised as a disability, to ensure people with FASD have access to the support they need. There has also been an acknowledgement of the far-reaching impacts of FASD and need to ensure that action is taken in the healthcare system, child protection system and criminal justice system to address FASD,” Ms Harrington said.

“Over the coming year, we are working with the Australian Government and NOFASD to deliver a national campaign on alcohol, pregnancy and breastfeeding. Alcohol pregnancy health warnings will also become mandatory on all alcohol products during 2023,” said Ms Caterina Giorgi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of FARE.

“This report builds on these significant prevention initiatives and maps out a comprehensive plan to address FASD. We now need Governments across Australia to commit to implementing these recommendations.”

“The actions taken by Governments to implement these recommendations have the potential to improve the lives of future generations. And with a condition that is preventable and also lifelong, we have a responsibility to put the health and wellbeing of families first – just as we are all doing now as a community,” Ms Giorgi said.

Caterina Giorgi, CEO Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education is available for interview.

Sophie Harrington, COO National Organisation of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders is available for interview.

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