



Media Release

International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day – 9th September 2012

Every year on September 9th, International FASD Awareness Day is observed. Proclamations are issued in countries, states, provinces, and towns all around the world. Bells are rung at 9:09 a.m. in every time zone from New Zealand to Alaska. People all around the world gather for events to raise awareness about the dangers of drinking during pregnancy and the plight of individuals and families who struggle with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

This year an event was hosted in Brisbane Collaboration for Alcohol Related Developmental Disorders (CARDD) based at the University of Queensland's Centre for Clinical Research (UQCCR) on Wednesday 5th September with a showcase of selected research achievements. In particular Dr Leith Moxon-Lester's research has identified the possibility that homocysteine, Vitamin B12 and folate all play a part in the amelioration of some of the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure.

'Alcohol exposure in-utero has had far greater consequences, both to individuals and society, than thalidomide. Although just one thalidomide tablet was toxic, its duration of harm lasted for only 32 days post conception and victims were easily identified at birth. By comparison, alcohol can damage the unborn across the entire nine months of pregnancy. At birth babies with FASD are less likely to be identified because the damage is brain-based with or without obvious physical defects.' Dr Hammill from UQCCR said.

CARDD's event this year had as their guest speaker, Mr Graham Perrett, Federal Member for Moreton and Chair of the House of Representatives Inquiry into FASD. Mr Perrett spoke of the findings of this year-long Inquiry which is due to be released soon.

"FASD does not discriminate. The committee has heard strong evidence that FASD is not just an issue for Indigenous communities with high alcohol consumption, but rather it is occurring in all our communities, regardless of socioeconomic or ethnic background," Federal Member for Moreton Graham Perrett said.

The rffada has been at the cutting edge of this work since it was established in 2007 and the founder; Anne Russell had lobbied for 7 years prior to that on behalf of NOFASARD. During the course of her 12 years of volunteer work, Anne has delivered presentations at conferences, workshops, training courses and fora; handed out hundreds of FASD packs on strategies, interventions and accommodations and perhaps more importantly, the rffada provides a freecall number, 1800 rffada for desperate parents to obtain quick and easy information about FASD.

"Research is now suggesting that between 2% and 5% of the population will be prenatally exposed to alcohol. For Australians this means a minimum of 440,000 and at the higher range, 1.1 million people may be affected. It is clear that many staff in organisations will need training on the identification of this condition and methods of mitigating further disabilities. If they don't, they could be exacerbating or creating additional problems for their clients.'

Both CARDD and the rffada agree that **for a healthy baby, no alcohol while pregnant is safest.**

For further information or a statement contact
Anne Russell on 0412550540 or elizabeth@rffada.org