



Media Release

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

National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan

The Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association (rffada) expresses gratitude to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) for producing a National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Action Plan. FARE collaborated with the rffada and other key organisations, researchers and FASD experts from around Australia. The Plan will be released on the 12th September in Parliament House in honour of International FASD Awareness Day.

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).

The National FASD Action Plan provides Australians with clear recommendations and pathways to ensure better provision of services and support for parents and carers and people living with FASD.

For over 14 years, individuals and organisations have been working tirelessly to support people living with the condition, prevent future affected births and provide training to services who are likely to have contact with people with FASD in their day to day activities.

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 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.

The House of Representatives Inquiry along with FARE's National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan is a culmination of intense lobbying for over a decade and represents a roadmap for the journey ahead.

'The Plan is long overdue because while there has been a huge amount of research undertaken, but those people in the rffada parents and carers support group, are still struggling to find medical professionals who can provide a positive contribution to the future of their children.' Anne Russell, EO of the rffada stated. 'I hear from many parents and carers over the course of a week and the struggle that they are engaged in to access appropriate and specific care is sad to hear.'

Many children with FASD in the school system are gradually developing secondary disabilities some of which could be avoided or reduced if appropriate accommodations were made.'

'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 the University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research said.

'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 need training in 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.'

For further information or a statement contact

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