



# Media Release

## Rffada endorses national FASD action plan

12 September 2012

The Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association (rffada) expresses gratitude to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) for producing the *Australian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Action Plan 2013–2016*.

FARE collaborated with the rffada and other key organisations, researchers and FASD experts from around Australia.

The 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 appropriate service providers.

The rffada has been at the cutting edge of this work since it was established in 2007. Founder and Executive Officer; Anne Russell had lobbied for 7 years prior to that on behalf of the National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Related Disorders (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. The rffada also provides a freecall number, 1800 rffada for desperate parents to obtain quick and easy to understand information about FASD.

Anne Russell says the current House of Representatives Inquiry together with FARE's plan represents the culmination of intense lobbying over a decade and represents a roadmap for the journey ahead.

"The Plan is long overdue. There has been a huge amount of research undertaken, but parents and carers still struggle to find medical professionals who can provide a positive contribution to the future of their children," Ms Russell said.

Alcohol can damage the unborn child across the entire nine months of pregnancy. Dr Hammill from the University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research says babies with FASD are not easily identified at birth because the damage is brain-based and not always accompanied by obvious physical defects.

"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," Dr Hammill said.

The Plan was released on the 12<sup>th</sup> September in Parliament House just days after International FASD Awareness Day.

Observed every day on September 9th, the day sees proclamations 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).

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