



19-20
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Education Centre
Royal Brisbane and
Women's Hospital
Butterfield St, Herston
Brisbane QLD

Media Release

AUCKLAND JUDGE TO DELIVER KEYNOTE FASD ADDRESS

18 November 2013: Auckland's District and Youth Court Judge Tony FitzGerald will present the opening Keynote address at the Australasian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) conference being held in Brisbane on 19- 20 November 2013. His presentation, *Current situation and developments with FASD in New Zealand; A District and Youth Court Judge's Perspective* will focus on the Judge's own experiences of learning about FASD and its impact on the NZ Court system. The plenary presentation will be followed by a Workshop on FASD and Criminal Justice Issues.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is an umbrella term describing a range of physical, behavioural and learning disorders that can arise from exposure to alcohol before birth. FASD is recognised internationally as the leading preventable cause of intellectual disability in the western world. It is also now recognised that a large number of individuals affected by FASD are at greater risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system. Individuals with FASD are at least 10 times more likely to offend than people in the general population. The alcohol-related brain damage occurring before birth makes it difficult for affected individuals to distinguish social rules and boundaries and to stay out of trouble with the law.

Judge FitzGerald says he has had a long held interest in issues affecting young offenders such as those with FASD. In 2007 he established the Intensive Monitoring Group ('the IMG') in the Auckland Youth Court, which accommodates young people who are at moderate to high risk of re-offending and have moderate to severe mental health and/or alcohol and other drug issues underlying their offending.

"In both the District and Youth Courts I meet people facing charges who suffer from FASD and other neurodisabilities. Common characteristics of those affected, that can lead to offending, include poor emotional regulation, impulse control and social judgment. Once they are before the Court, characteristics include such things as non-compliance with bail conditions and repetition of the same mistakes even after attending standard rehabilitation programmes.

"In the absence of information to the contrary, such behaviours are viewed as criminal justice issues only, and therefore tend to be addressed by increasingly severe sanctions when the offending continues. That approach is doing nothing to change the life course of those affected by the neurodisability or reduce their risk of reoffending.

“By seeing the behaviour for what it is and responding appropriately, those with FASD are able to have productive lives and there can be significant reductions made to the risk of recidivism and the associated costs to society,” Judge FitzGerald said.

The conference - being held by the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) - is bringing together Australian and New Zealand health organisations concerned about FASD and actively engaged with its prevention and intervention. The conference aims to unite people and organisations from across the South West Pacific region to exchange knowledge and experiences on practice, research, policy and care.

Media Contacts

Judge FitzGerald can be contacted at the Auckland District Court via his PA Stefan Titze - ph 09 916 9009 or email Stefan.Titze@justice.govt.nz.

For information about FASD in New Zealand, contact Christine Rogan, Fetal Alcohol Network Coordinator for Alcohol Healthwatch - email christine@ahw.org.nz or ph 09 5207037.

For all other Australasian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) conference media enquiries contact Jeremy Henderson 0425 559 710



Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is an independent, charitable organisation working to prevent the harmful use of alcohol in Australia. Since 2001, FARE has invested over \$115 million in research and community projects to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse on Australians. Through its national grants program and commissioned research, FARE has established itself as a leading voice on alcohol and other drugs issues. FARE works with community groups, all levels of government, police, emergency workers, research institutions and the private sector to address alcohol-related problems. For further information visit FARE’s website: www.fare.org.au



Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia and works to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. The Association seeks better population health outcomes based on prevention, the social determinants of health and equity principles. For further information visit PHAA’s website: www.phaa.net.au/