

MEDIA RELEASE

SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2024

Australian landmarks go red to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Major landmarks across the country will go red this September to mark International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Month, encouraging conversations about FASD and the importance of supporting alcohol-free pregnancies.

More than 60 sites including Federation Square, the Story Bridge, the Matagarup Bridge and the Big Banana, will be lit up red on 9 September to mark FASD Awareness Day.

FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi said, “The Red Shoes Rock campaign encourages people to wear red shoes or socks throughout September, to spark conversations about FASD, and to create supportive communities for alcohol-free pregnancies.”

National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders COO Sophie Harrington said “FASD is the leading preventable developmental disability in Australia. We encourage everyone to head out to one of the many community events throughout September or share a photo of your red shoes on social media to increase awareness of this hidden disability.”

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation CEO Pat Turner AM said “For decades, the Aboriginal community has demonstrated leadership in responding to FASD. Having these important conversations is a vital step in supporting strong and healthy mums and bubs.”

Red flags will be flown throughout Canberra, and an event will be held at Parliament House on 9 September with lived experience advocates and community organisations.

Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler said “The Australian Government is proud to support this campaign to increase awareness of FASD to create generational change in achieving alcohol-free pregnancies.”

The Red Shoes Rock campaign began in 2013 when RJ Formanek, a Canadian man who lives with FASD, started wearing red shoes as a conversation starter. The campaign is now recognised around the world every September.

Co-Chair, national FASD Advisory Group and Chair, FASD Hub Australia, Professor Elizabeth Elliott AM said: “Each week in my FASD clinic I meet children with devastating health, learning and behavioural challenges. As well as raising awareness we must prioritise



implementing evidence-based prevention policy to minimise harms from prenatal alcohol exposure.”

FASD Advocate, Jessica Birch said, “As someone who lives with FASD, I know it is deeply misunderstood and often misdiagnosed. Help us amplify the conversation by wearing and sharing photos and videos of your red shoes online and in the community.”

FASD Advocate, Angelene Bruce said, “My son was diagnosed with FASD by age four, he is thriving thanks to early diagnosis and FASD informed interventions. I encourage everyone to go red this September to raise awareness, so more people can be FASD-informed and know where to get appropriate support.”

For a full list of locations being lit up red visit <https://redshoesrock.org.au/landmarks/>

To get involved in FASD Awareness Month and Red Shoes Rock visit <https://redshoesrock.org.au/>

The following spokespeople are available for interview:

- **Caterina Giorgi, FARE CEO**
- **Sophie Harrington, NOFASD COO**
- **Monica Barolits-McCabe, NACCHO Executive Director**
- **Professor Elizabeth Elliott AM, Co-Chair, national FASD Advisory Group and Chair, FASD Hub Australia**
- **Jessica Birch, FASD Advocate**
- **Angelene Bruce, FASD Advocate**

Media contact: Kate Lewis | 0411 670 886 | media@fare.org.au