

**Media Release**

## **FASD HARMS REMAIN HIDDEN: PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY IGNORED**

**4 June 2013:** The Federal Government has been accused of ignoring the devastating harms caused by fetal alcohol exposure by failing to respond to an all-party Inquiry report tabled in Parliament six months ago.

The report, *FASD: The Hidden Harm, Inquiry into the prevention, diagnosis and management of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders*, prescribed a strict timetable for action, but those deadlines have either passed or are unlikely to be met.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says that in failing to respond to the Parliamentary Inquiry report tabled last November, the Government has once again shown itself unwilling to demonstrate leadership on FASD as a crucial issue of public health.

“Every day that this government fails to act, an incurable and preventable disorder becomes more prevalent. Every day that this Government fails to act, people in our community with FASD and their family and carers are destined to a bleaker future without much needed access to appropriate support,” Mr Thorn said.

FASD is a non-diagnostic term representing a range of conditions that result from fetal alcohol exposure, and is the most common preventable cause of non-genetic developmental disability in Australia.

Vicki Russell, Chief Executive of the National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Related Disorders (NOFASARD) speaks to families directly affected by FASD each day and says despite the Inquiry and a report which held so much promise; their issues of concern remain unchanged.

“I am very concerned that six months on from the Inquiry, people living with FASD, and their families and carers still have limited support options with few having access to disability services. They are still bewildered that a government doesn’t commit to implementing support for this lifelong condition,” Ms Russell said.

Michael Thorn says that the Committees first recommendation to the Government was to develop a FASD Action Plan, and points out much of that work is already completed and ready to be implemented.

In September last year FARE presented to Government a fully costed \$37 million solution to address the gaps in the prevention and management of FASD. The plan was endorsed by Australia's leading FASD experts, and acknowledged by the Inquiry as a 'useful adjunct to the recommendations of this report'.

Handing down the report last year, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee Chair Mr Graham Perrett warned that 'we cannot keep hidden the devastating harms being caused by fetal alcohol exposure'.

FARE Chief Executive, Michael Thorn is concerned that by sitting on its hands, the Government is doing precisely that.

"When this FASD report was tabled in Parliament last November, we applauded the delivery of a comprehensive report; we echoed the Committee's call for swift action to address FASD, and we waited. Today, six months later we're still waiting. Any further delays are simply unacceptable," Mr Thorn said.

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**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](http://www.fare.org.au)

**The National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Related Disorders (NOFASARD)** is the peak national non-government organisation representing the interests of parents, carers and others interested in or affected by FASD. Through education, training and advocacy, NOFASARD aims to prevent FASD and improve the lives of children/adults living with FASD and the families who support them. NOFASARD delivers support to families living with FASD and education and training workshops for both government and non-government agencies throughout Australia. [www.nofasard.org.au](http://www.nofasard.org.au)