

Landmarks turn red to raise awareness of hidden disability that affects up to one million Australians

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01AM, TUESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2025

9 September 2025:

More than 70 landmarks across Australia will light up in red today as part of Red Shoes Rock, a campaign to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), a hidden and under-diagnosed disability that affects up to one million Australians.

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.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) CEO Ayla Chorley said alcohol consumed at any stage of pregnancy passes directly to the baby and can damage their developing brain, body, and organs, and this can lead to the lifelong disability called FASD.

“With the right supports and understanding from health professionals and communities, people who live with FASD can be given every opportunity to thrive. That’s why it’s so important to have conversations about FASD, and invest in prevention, early screening and informed supports,” she said.

National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (NOFASD Australia) CEO Sophie Harrington said: “People with FASD have the right to be heard, understood and supported. This September, we’re encouraging everyone to head to a Red Shoes Rock community event, commit to learning more about FASD or post a photo of their red shoes on social media to join in the conversation.”

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Chair Donnell Mills said: “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have always led the way in addressing FASD. By talking openly, sharing knowledge and standing together, we create a future where every mum feels supported and every bub grows up strong and thriving.”

This year, the first study to estimate FASD prevalence in the general population in Australia, led by the [University of Sydney](#), revealed that up to 3.64% of Australians – 990,800 people – may have FASD. This estimate was based on Australian data on the prevalence of alcohol use in pregnancy and the estimated risk of FASD following prenatal alcohol exposure.

Co-Chair, national FASD Advisory Group and Chair of FASD Hub Australia, Distinguished Professor Elizabeth Elliott AM said: “This study shows we need action across multiple sectors – health, education, justice and social services – to ensure supportive environments for alcohol-free pregnancies, early screening and informed supports for people living with FASD.”

Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler said: “The Albanese Government is proud to fund the Every Moment Matters campaign, which continues to significantly reduce the health harms of alcohol across Australia.”

Jessica Birch, a Lived Experience Advocate who was diagnosed with FASD when she was 33 said: “People living with FASD have just as much need and desire to participate fully in their communities, we often just need help to do that. Greater awareness means greater understanding, support and capacity for individuals to succeed in a world that often feels too challenging to navigate.”

Angelene Bruce, a Lived Experience Advocate whose son lives with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) said: “Seeing stigma-free, courageous conversations and real representation of FASD in events like Red Shoes Rock means the world to families like mine. It gives children the dignity and acceptance they deserve.”

[See the list of landmarks going red across Australia](#)

[See the list of events at NOFASD Australia](#)

Available for interview:

- Ayla Chorley, CEO, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education
- Sophie Harrington, CEO, National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (NOFASD Australia)
- Distinguished Professor Elizabeth Elliott AM, Co-Chair, National FASD Advisory Group and Chair, FASD Hub Australia
- Jessica Birch, Lived Experience Advocate
- Angelene Bruce, Lived Experience Advocate

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education** (FARE) is a not-for-profit organisation with a vision for an Australia free from alcohol harms – where communities are healthy and well and where laws, policies and programs are fair, equitable and just.

Every day, people across Australia are negatively impacted by alcohol, through injury, violence, mental ill-health, chronic disease, family violence and disadvantage. Far too many Australians die because of alcohol.

We work collaboratively to build the capacity of people wanting to create change, raise community awareness of alcohol harms, advocate for policy change aimed at preventing alcohol-related harms and increase accountability of companies that fuel harm.

Working with local communities, people with lived experience of alcohol harm, values-aligned organisations, health professionals, researchers and governments across the nation, we are improving the health and wellbeing of everyone in Australia.