

## Low awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

*International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day - 9 September*

### 9 September 2021

This International FASD Awareness Day, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and NOFASD are calling on Australians to contribute to the prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

FASD refers to the range of neurodevelopmental impairments caused by alcohol exposure during pregnancy. It is the leading preventable developmental disability in Australia.

International FASD Awareness Day aims to raise awareness of the experience of people with FASD and their families, and the risks of drinking during pregnancy.

FARE CEO, Caterina Giorgi, said that a new polling snapshot by FARE has identified that many Australians are not aware that alcohol is harmful to health during pregnancy.

“Almost one in three Australians aren’t aware that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause FASD and almost one in four aren’t aware that alcohol should be avoided altogether in pregnancy,” Ms Giorgi said.

“Not drinking any alcohol during pregnancy is best for the health of the mum and developing baby.

“By creating supportive environments for alcohol free pregnancies, together we can improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for our children, families and communities for future generations.”

The key findings of the *Alcohol use, pregnancy and FASD – Polling snapshot* are:

- Almost one third (30 per cent) of Australians are unaware that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause FASD.
- Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of Australians aren’t aware that people who are pregnant should not drink any alcohol, according to government health guidelines.
- Men have lower awareness than women of the risk of FASD and that alcohol should not be consumed when pregnant.
- People aged 18-34 years old had the lowest awareness of the risk of FASD (37 per cent unaware) and that alcohol should not be consumed when pregnant (32 per cent unaware).
- When comparing across States and Territories, awareness of the risk of FASD was higher in Western Australia (77 per cent) and Queensland (74 per cent), and lower in Victoria (67 per cent) and New South Wales (68 per cent).

NOFASD CEO, Louise Gray, said today that we all have a part to play in preventing FASD.

“People with FASD experience lifelong challenges in their daily living, and need support with their physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills,” Mrs Gray said.

“People with FASD and their families can face stigma, negative stereotypes and harmful biases, due to misunderstandings about the Disorder and its impacts.

“This International FASD Awareness Day we’re calling on all Australians to take some time to learn about the disorder, how to prevent it and to understand the effects it can have on families.”

Around the world, the month of September is recognised as FASD month to raise awareness about FASD and the importance of an alcohol-free pregnancy.

To raise awareness of FASD, during September and on International FASD Awareness Day on 9 September, you can participate by supporting Red Shoes Rock.

Red Shoes Rock was started by RJ Formanek, an educator and advocate living with FASD. RJ wears red shoes to stand out and be noticed while starting conversations about FASD.

For more information about International FASD Awareness Day visit <https://www.nofasd.org.au/community/international-fasd-awareness-day/>

**Media contact:**

FARE

Kirsty Waterford

**media@fare.org.au**

0429 291 120

ABOUT FARE

The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education** (FARE) is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We approach this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion programs.

To learn more about us and our work visit [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au).

ABOUT NOFASD

NOFASD Australia is a family-focused organisation and is the essential bridge linking those with lived experience with researchers and clinicians.

To learn more visit [www.nofasd.org.au](http://www.nofasd.org.au)