

Red shoes rock and landmarks shine during FASD Awareness Month

9 September 2026

September marks International FASD Awareness Month, an opportunity to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), a lifelong disability affecting up to one million Australians that is frequently missed or misunderstood.

Throughout the month, Australians are encouraged to take part in the Red Shoes Rock campaign by wearing red shoes or socks, sharing photos on social media, attending local events and showing their support for people living with FASD and their families.

On 9 September, which is International FASD Awareness Day, 87 landmarks across Australia will be illuminated in red, creating a powerful visual display of support and helping to spark conversations about FASD in communities across the country.

FASD is a lifelong disability caused by alcohol exposure before birth and is estimated to affect 3.64% of the Australian population – approximately 1 in every 28 people.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) CEO Ayla Chorley said the campaign provides an important opportunity to build understanding of FASD and reinforce the importance of alcohol-free pregnancies.

“Alcohol exposure at any stage of pregnancy can affect a baby’s developing brain and body, which can lead to lifelong impacts including FASD,” Ms Chorley said.

“That’s why greater awareness about FASD is critical. With early identification, informed support and understanding communities, people living with FASD can be supported to participate fully in their communities and have the opportunities they deserve.

“And it’s why campaigns like Red Shoes Rock are so important. They help start conversations, reduce stigma, and encourage investment in prevention, early screening and the supports that individuals and families need.”

Jessica Birch, a lived experience advocate who was diagnosed with FASD at age 33, said greater awareness would help create more inclusive communities.

“Like everyone else, people living with FASD want to contribute, connect and participate fully in their communities. With greater awareness comes greater understanding, support and the opportunity to succeed in a world that is often difficult to navigate. I’m proud to share my story and hope it encourages others living with FASD to feel safe sharing their experiences as well.”

On 7 September, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) co-hosted an event at Parliament House Canberra that focused children with FASD in out-of-home-care, bringing together policymakers, sector leaders and people with lived experience to discuss the challenges facing children and families impacted by FASD, and the need for earlier identification and support.

Distinguished Professor Elizabeth Elliott AO, Co-Chair of the National FASD Advisory Group, Chair of FASD Hub Australia, and Director of the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in FASD highlighted the importance of responding better to vulnerable children with FASD in the child protection system.

“This includes providing concerted and systematic support to assist biological families to retain care of their children; promoting access for mothers to alcohol and other drug services; and screening all children entering child protection or out-of-home-care for prenatal alcohol exposure. We must also provide social and financial scaffolds for the dedicated foster and kinship carers of children with FASD to enable them to respond to the challenges at home and school,” Professor Elliott said.

National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (NOFASD Australia) CEO Sophie Harrington said everyone had a role to play in building awareness.

“NOFASD Australia has joined with international FASD organisations this year in Canada and New Zealand in embracing the theme 'Everyone plays a part: It takes a community to raise awareness of FASD' and we are encouraging all Australians to learn something about FASD, so that this life-long disability receives the understanding and support it deserves. This year we're delighted that a record number of 87 landmarks around Australia have committed to lighting up in red during September to shine a light on FASD.

“Evidence indicates that children with FASD are disproportionately represented in out-of-home care. Earlier recognition of FASD, combined with informed and compassionate supports, can help improve placement stability, educational outcomes and lifelong wellbeing.”

Find a full list of locations that will light up red on 9 September [here](#).

Find out more about the Red Shoes Rock campaign [here](#).

-ENDS-

Media outlets are requested to promote help-seeking information when reporting on alcohol and other drugs, in line with the [Mindframe National Guidelines](#).

Suggested wording relating this this media story: *If you or someone you know needs support, please call Lifeline 13 11 14, the National 24/7 Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline 1800 250 015 or 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732.*

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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. 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. To learn more about us and our work visit www.fare.org.au