



MEDIA RELEASE

Communities unite to shine a light on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Today the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), the National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (NOFASD) and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) launched the [Red Shoes Rock](#) campaign.

FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi said, “September is International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Month, a time to have conversations about this largely invisible disability, and empower communities to support alcohol-free pregnancies.

FASD is the leading preventable disability in Australia. People with FASD can experience challenges such as physical and emotional developmental delay, impaired speech and language development, learning difficulties and difficulties controlling behaviour.

NOFASD COO Sophie Harrington said, “Alcohol use at any time from conception throughout pregnancy can damage the brain and body of the developing baby. This can lead to FASD, a lifelong disability.

“This September we’re encouraging people to wear red shoes or socks to spark conversations and create understanding about FASD, and how to prevent it.”

NACCHO CEO Pat Turner stated, “Growing strong and healthy mums and bubs is everyone’s business – and having a conversation about it is the starting point.”

This September more than 50 public landmarks across Australia will be lit up red and community events will be held across the country.

Red flags will be flown throughout central Canberra, and an event will be held at Parliament House on 5 September with people who have a lived experience of FASD.

Since 2021, FARE, NOFASD and NACCHO have led the [Every Moment Matters](#) and [Strong Born](#) campaigns, which are overcoming mixed messages and a lack of understanding about alcohol, pregnancy and FASD.

Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler said “The Australian Government is proud to support the *Every Moment Matters* and *Strong Born* national prevention campaigns – the first of their kind in Australia and the world.

“These campaigns are making an impact and are contributing to a generational change, where families and communities are healthier, and more people are supported to have alcohol-free pregnancies.”

The results of the ongoing evaluation led by the University of Adelaide demonstrates that *Every Moment Matters* is raising awareness about alcohol and pregnancy, as well as increasing understanding about FASD.

To date, the campaign video has reached over 2.3 million women aged 18-49 years and been viewed 28 million times. In addition, the campaign website is being visited by more than 30,000 people every month.

The results of the evaluation demonstrate the campaign is making a difference, with surveys of the target audience finding that between January 2022 and March 2023:

- 82.3 per cent of respondents stated there is no safe number of alcoholic drinks that can be consumed during pregnancy (up from 58.3 per cent)
- 80.3 per cent of respondents reported not drinking any alcohol in pregnancy (up from 68.8 per cent)
- 63.5 per cent of respondents have heard of FASD (up from 52.3 per cent)
- 70.2 per cent of respondents now know that FASD is a risk of alcohol consumption in pregnancy (up from 59.4 per cent)
- 90.9 per cent of respondents said they will not drink alcohol if they become pregnant (up from 82.6 per cent).

Through the *Strong Born* campaign, NACCHO has provided \$1.6 million of grant funding to Aboriginal community controlled organisations across Australia to raise awareness and understanding of FASD and the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy.

Strong Born is also about supporting people with FASD and their families and carers, by understanding what FASD is, and the support services available.

The campaigns are based on the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking* (the Guidelines), which state that women who are pregnant should not drink alcohol, and for women who are breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for their baby.

To get involved in Red Shoes Rock visit redshoesrock.org.au

To find out more about FASD visit:

- everymomentmatters.org.au
- nofasd.org.au
- naccho.org.au/FASD

The following spokespeople are available for interview:

- **Caterina Giorgi, FARE CEO**
- **Sophie Harrington, NOFASD COO**
- **Pat Turner, NACCHO CEO**

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