



19-20
November
2013

Education Centre
Royal Brisbane and
Women's Hospital
Butterfield St, Herston
Brisbane QLD

Media Release

For Immediate Release

URGENT CALL FOR ACTION ON FASD

20 November 2013: The Australasian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Conference has today called for urgent and immediate action to prevent FASD and to support people affected, and the new Government is being urged to honour and extend a \$20 million funding commitment made by the previous Government.

Conference speaker, Federal Liberal MP, Dr Sharman Stone, says for over 30 years Australia has failed to provide an immediate, sustainable and effective response” to this problem, and warns Australian society must no longer ignore the human tragedy of FASD.

Over the past two days in Brisbane, 160 delegates including people living with FASD, parents and carers, not-for-profit and government representatives, researchers and health professionals have attended the *Australasian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Conference: A time to learn, a time to act*.

A consensus statement released later today acknowledges the urgent need to act to prevent and diagnose FASD, and to support people living with FASD, their parents and carers.

Professor Mike Daube, Convenor of the Public Health Association of Australia’s (PHAA) Alcohol Special Interest Group, said the Conference has provided a platform to refocus the nation’s attention on the leading preventable cause of non-genetic intellectual disability in Australia, and to examine the challenges that remain.

“People born with FASD have the disability for life and the implications are far reaching. As we have heard during this Conference, there remain significant gaps in the prevention, diagnosis and management of FASD in Australia. A properly funded national action plan is urgently required if we hope to see further progress in this area. We also need to ensure complementary regulatory action through effective warning labels and curbs on alcohol products and promotions directed at young women,” Professor Daube said.

After decades of passionate advocacy for policies and programs to address FASD, earlier this year the previous Government announced the *Action Plan to Reduce the Impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) 2013-14 to 2016-17* with a \$20 million funding allocation.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, (FARE) Chief Executive, Michael Thorn says that is unclear whether the new Government will endorse the Rudd Government's \$20 million action plan.

"Families affected by FASD, community members, researchers and families have long advocated for the need for Governments to take action to address the significant failure of successive administrations to stop babies being born with alcohol caused brain damage. The new Commonwealth Government has inherited a \$20 million budget to take action to prevent, diagnose, and support those affected by FASD. I look forward to working with the new Government to begin the implementation of this program," Mr Thorn said.

The International Charter on the Prevention of FASD states: "When millions of babies are born every year with permanent brain injury from a known and preventable cause, the response ought to be immediate, sustainable and effective".

According to Conference speaker, Dr Sharman Stone, the Federal Member for Murray, Australia is amongst those nations yet to make an "immediate, sustainable and effective response" to this problem.

"Hundreds of Australian babies a year are born brain damaged through fetal exposure to alcohol. Yet we still do not have mandated alcohol labelling, we have no diagnostic clinics, our diagnostic tool is still under development, less than half of our health professionals routinely ask pregnant women about their alcohol use, prevalence data is not collected, too many Australians are not aware of the risks, and too many women continue to drink while pregnant. Australian society must no longer ignore the human tragedy of FASD," Sharman Stone said.

Media Contact

Professor Mike Daube		0409 933 933
Michael Thorn	Jeremy Henderson	0425 559 710
Dr Sharman Stone		02 6277 4477

The Australasian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Conference: Time to learn, time to act, is being held by the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and FARE in association with the National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Related Disorders (NOFASD) Australia, the Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association (RFFADA), Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, University of Sydney, Alcohol HealthWatch New Zealand and the University of Queensland.



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



Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia and works to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. The Association seeks better population health outcomes based on prevention, the social determinants of health and equity principles. For further information visit PHAA's website: www.phaa.net.au/