

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Health**

**Community Affairs**

**Inquiry into Effective approaches to prevention, diagnosis and support for  
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

**19 May 2020**

**PDR Number: IQ20-000672**

**Provide an update on progress on the National Alcohol Strategy**

**Written**

**Senator: Stirling Griff**

**Question:**

Can you please provide an update on progress on the National Alcohol Strategy with regards to Priority 2 and Priority 3, and specifically these FASD-related objectives (p26 of the NAS):

- a. Improve FASD prevention through community awareness, and improved FASD detection, diagnosis and access to therapy (in particular what is being done with regards to detection, diagnosis and access to therapy)
- b. Increase awareness of the full range of treatment options for women at risk, including outpatient counselling and relapse prevention medicines for dependence.
- c. Promote harms to developing baby as a result of maternal alcohol consumption in school and post secondary and tertiary education.
- d. Disseminate, promote and provide training to support the use of established resources.
- e. Improve access to support services, including through the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

**Answer:**

***Can you please provide an update on progress on the National Alcohol Strategy with regards to Priority 2 and Priority 3, and specifically these FASD-related objectives (p26 of the NAS).***

On 28 November 2019, the *National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028 (NAS)* was endorsed by all states and territories through the Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum. The NAS provides a national framework for governments, communities, organisations and industry for reducing the harms of alcohol on the Australian community. A key aim of the strategy is a 10 per cent reduction in harmful drinking.

***a. Improve FASD prevention through community awareness, and improved FASD detection, diagnosis and access to therapy (in particular what is being done with regards to detection, diagnosis and access to therapy).***

In December 2019, the Government announced \$25 million over 4 years for the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) to implement a National Awareness Campaign for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Women. This campaign will raise awareness of the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, including FASD, by delivering activities under four work streams: mainstream awareness; resources for consumers; resources for use by health professionals; and Indigenous health promotion. FARE is currently undertaking research to inform the development of campaign resources. Campaign assets including videos, social media tiles, posters, podcasts and broadcast advertising materials are expected to be available in the first quarter of 2021.

On 9 September 2020, Minister Hunt announced new funding of nearly \$24 million over 4 years from 2020-21 for *FASD Diagnostic and Support Services*. This initiative will reduce waiting times for FASD diagnostic services and support people who have been diagnosed with FASD, their families and carers.

The *FASD Diagnostic and Support Services* measure builds on the Government's previous investment of over \$52 million since 2013-14, which has produced an Australian FASD Diagnostic Tool, provided support for alcohol dependant women, increased awareness of the risks of FASD and established evidence-based diagnostic services.

***b. Increase awareness of the full range of treatment options for women at risk, including outpatient counselling and relapse prevention medicines for dependence.***

The Australian Government has committed more than \$800 million over four years (from July 2018) to reduce the impact of drug and alcohol misuse on individuals, families and communities through the overarching *Drug and Alcohol Program*.

Although state and territory governments are the primary funders of drug and alcohol treatment services, the Commonwealth investment of over \$800 million includes more than \$660 million over four years (from July 2018) for drug and alcohol treatment services and national leadership. These services are available to support people with alcohol as their primary drug of concern.

Additionally, the Government is funding the revision of the Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems. The review of these guidelines is intended to provide up-to-date, evidence-based information to clinicians on the available treatments for people with alcohol problems. The review is expected to be completed in the coming months and finalised guidelines released early in 2021.

Under the support for the *FASD Strategic Action Plan* initiative the Australian Government has allocated \$600,000 over three years from 2019-20 to increase community knowledge and awareness about the harms and lifelong consequences of FASD, including through the promotion of International FASD Awareness Day, held on 9 September each year.

***c. Promote harms to developing baby as a result of maternal alcohol consumption in school and post secondary and tertiary education.***

In addition to the \$25 million for FARE to implement a National Awareness Campaign for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Women, \$600,000 has been allocated under the *FASD Strategic Action Plan* for the development of a suite of evidence-based resources for teachers and educational settings. The intention of this activity is to provide resources for educators to draw on and assist in identifying and managing students with FASD.

***d. Disseminate, promote and provide training to support the use of established resources.***

In 2018-19, the Government committed \$7.2 million over four years to support the *National FASD Strategic Action Plan 2018-2028*. This funding included \$600,000, over three years from 2019-20 to support a comprehensive review and update of the FASD Diagnostic Tool and to conduct dissemination activities for the updated version of the tool.

The FASD Diagnostic Tool provides Australian health professionals with standardised diagnostic resources on FASD. The FASD Diagnostic Tool facilitates the diagnosis of FASD, and rates the level of impairment and functional impact on an individual. A review will ensure that the tool aligns with the latest international and clinical best practice for diagnosis of FASD.

In addition to this, through the National Awareness Campaign a suite of resources targeting health professionals will be developed which builds on the successful *Women Want to Know* initiative that was previously developed by FARE. Resources will target professionals from various sectors involved with the care of women, including GPs and primary health care providers, midwives and obstetricians.

The National Awareness Campaign involves key partners involved in the training and professional development of clinicians, including various professional colleges.

The 2009 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol (the Guidelines) are being revised by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The Guidelines provide alcohol consumption recommendations based on an estimated cumulative risk of alcohol-related injury/disease over a lifetime, allowing individuals to make informed decisions about their drinking habits. Final guidelines are expected to be released late-2020.

In addition to this, the updated Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems are expected to be released in early 2021.

***e. Improve access to support services, including through the National Disability Insurance Scheme.***

In 2018-19, the Government committed \$7.2 million over four years to Support for *FASD Strategic Action Plan* initiatives.

The Government currently funds the FASD Hub, which provides a one-stop repository for clinicians and individuals with FASD, their families and carers. The FASD Hub Australia website is intended to provide general information to health professionals, parents and carers, researchers, policy makers and the general public on a range of issues relating to FASD including where people can find various support services.

In 2016-17 the Government provided over \$1.5 million over 3 years to the National Organisation for FASD Australia (NOFASD) to provide support for individuals and families affected by FASD through the provision of online and telephone support information services which includes dissemination of information, assistance with referral processes and delivery of education and training workshops. This funding will be extended for a further 4 years through the 2020-21 measure announced in September 2020.

The Department of Social Services and the National Disability Insurance Agency are responsible for support available through the National Disability Insurance Scheme.