



Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders underway

Exposing a developing foetus to even small quantities of alcohol can result in a range of cognitive, physical, mental, behavioural, learning and developmental disorders known as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Currently Australia lacks national awareness of the dangers of alcohol consumption to the unborn child, and there are limited diagnostic tools and care strategies for those affected by FASD.

The Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee is investigating the incidence and prevention of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in Australia. The Committee is seeking submissions from a wide range of organisations and individuals with an interest in the prevention, diagnosis or management of FASD.

The Committee has already conducted public hearings in Cairns and Townsville, hearing from families, foster carers, remote area nurses and specialist health workers. The Committee plans to visit other parts of Australia to investigate diagnostic tools, effective prevention strategies, and programs that assist people affected by FASD in the areas of education, health, employment and criminal justice.

Committee Chair Graham Perrett MP said, “Like other disabilities, FASD has an enormous impact on people’s health, independence, education, employment and opportunities in life. Yet FASD is not a recognised disability. Parents, foster carers and families are struggling to provide appropriate support for affected children and sadly many children end up in the criminal justice system because of behavioural issues and lack of early intervention.

“We have received around 50 submissions to the inquiry, and urge anyone who has professional or personal experience with FASD, or views about prevention strategies and educating people of the dangers of alcohol consumption while pregnant, to contribute to the inquiry. The Committee also welcomes personal stories, even anonymously, of the challenges that people with FASD and their carers face.”

The Committee welcomes submissions, preferably by 19 March 2012, but late submissions will be accepted. For more information on the inquiry or advice about making a submission, visit <http://www.apf.gov.au/fasd> or contact the Secretariat on 02 6277 2358.

Inquiry Terms of Reference:

- **Prevention strategies** - including education campaigns and consideration of options such as product warnings and other mechanisms to raise awareness of the harmful nature of alcohol assumption during pregnancy
- **Intervention needs** - including FASD diagnostic tools for health and other professionals, and the early intervention therapies aimed at minimising the impact of FASD on affected individuals, and
- **Management issues** - including access to appropriate community care and support services across education, health, community services, employment and criminal justice sectors for the communities, families and individuals affected by FASD.

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair, Mr Graham Perrett MP, on (07) 3344 2622 or 0408 883 312.

For all other information, please contact the **Secretariat of the Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs:**

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