



**DRUG AND ALCOHOL NURSES OF AUSTRALASIA  
SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**INQUIRY INTO FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER**

The Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

The Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia (DANA) is the peak professional nursing body providing leadership and support to nurses and midwives with a professional interest in Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug (ATOD) issues.

DANA recognizes that Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term for a range of disabilities that result from prenatal alcohol exposure. The impact is significant with the effects ranging from language impairment, growth disturbance, facial feature abnormalities, memory problems, poor impulse control, epilepsy and mental, social and emotional delays.

The DANA executive team has had the opportunity to review a number of the 56 submissions available on the House of Representatives Standing Committees website (as at 10 March, 2012). The range and scope of recommendations are noted. DANA supports a number of recommendations made by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA), the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA) and the Royal Australasian Commission of Physician.

With reference to the above submissions, DANA supports:

- a holistic strategic approach to FASD
- raising public awareness in the general population through campaigns that highlight harmful alcohol use as it relates to the unborn child and the general health of girls and women
- increasing awareness of the National Health and Medical Research Council low risk drinking guidelines, with a particular focus on guideline four on maternal alcohol consumption
- targeted education of high risk groups through health and community services

- provision of culturally appropriate recovery and support services for pregnant women with alcohol and mental health problems, including post-partum support
- prevention, intervention and management strategies of at-risk populations to achieve better outcomes for the individual and community
- reviewing and supporting models of FASD screening processes
- research and development of a FASD diagnostic tool
- research to determine the prevalence, risk, health, social, economic and long term impact of FASD
- support for and development of formal training programs for health professionals
- the need to address the broader issue of cultural change to alcohol

One of the key recommendations supported by DANA is the effective use of brief and opportunistic intervention. DANA recognizes the importance of brief and opportunistic interventions and recommends the training of a range of health professionals. DANA recommends that that the Inquiry identifies a clear and consistent message for health providers and that consistent information is provided across service sectors (i.e. drug and alcohol sector, maternity services etc).

It is hoped that as part of the Inquiry, there is a review of the current training delivered to health staff that provide services to pregnant women and training strategies are indentified that will support staff in the early identification of FASD and/or of women who are at risk of FASD. This includes implementation of universal screening in pregnancy (first antenatal visit and each trimester) and the use of brief interventions where indicated.

The DANA Executive team welcomes the opportunity to discuss any recommendations raised in this submission further. The contact member is:

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