



## **Stealing the futures of children: Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)**

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders or FASD are the most common preventable cause of birth defects and brain damage in children – and yet Australia lacks recognised prevention, diagnosis and intervention. The incidence and prevention of FASD is the subject of a critical inquiry being undertaken by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs.

FASD is an umbrella term used to describe a range of disabilities and a continuum of effects that may arise from prenatal alcohol exposure. The Committee will investigate and report on:

- **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.

Committee Chair Graham Perrett said “FASD is not curable – but it is preventable. This is an issue that touches many lives. Sadly, many women are unaware of the devastating effects that even small amounts of alcohol can have on the foetus.”

“Even more tragic is that binge drinking among young people and some communities where excessive alcohol consumption is the norm is increasing the cases of FASD and robbing many more children of their futures. These children can end up with lifelong learning disorders and behavioural problems, often bringing them in contact with child welfare and the criminal justice system.”

The Committee will conduct hearings in **Cairns** and **Townsville** on **Tuesday 31 January** as part of its national program of public hearings through 2012. The Committee will hear from foster carers, regional health services, child mental health workers and nursing professionals.

**9am to 12 noon      Sebel Hotel 17 Abbott St, Cairns**  
**3pm to 5:30        Reef HQ 2068 Flinders St, Townsville**

Late submissions will be accepted to the inquiry. For the full terms of reference and advice on making submissions see the Committee’s website at [www.aph.gov.au/fasd](http://www.aph.gov.au/fasd) or contact the committee secretariat on **(02) 6277 2358**. Submissions authorised for publication by the Committee can be viewed at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/spla/fasd/subs.htm>.

**The hearings will be broadcast live via: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>**

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

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

PO Box 6021  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA  
ACT 2600

Telephone: 02 6277 2358  
Facsimile: 02 6277 4427  
E-mail: [spla.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:spla.reps@aph.gov.au)  
Website: [www.aph.gov.au/spla](http://www.aph.gov.au/spla)