



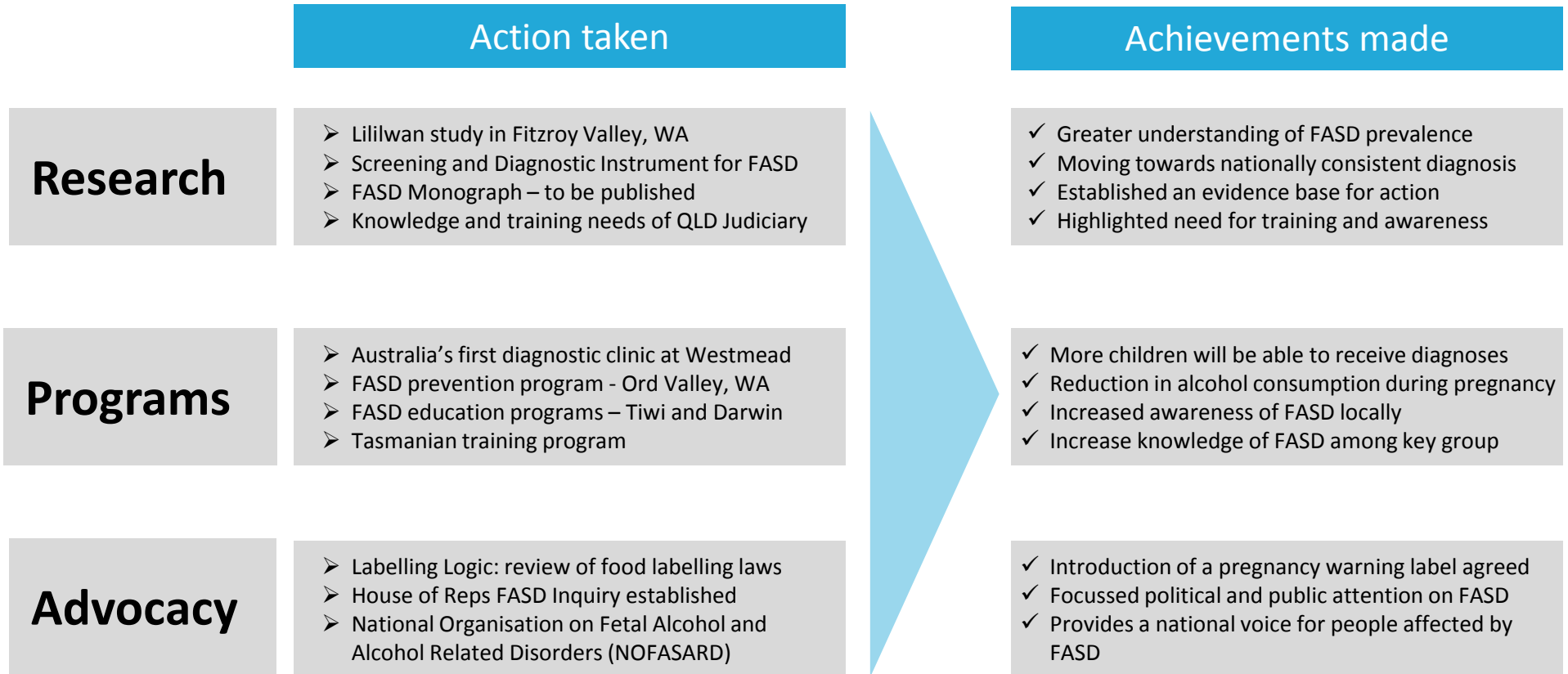
Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education



Changing the way we respond to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education

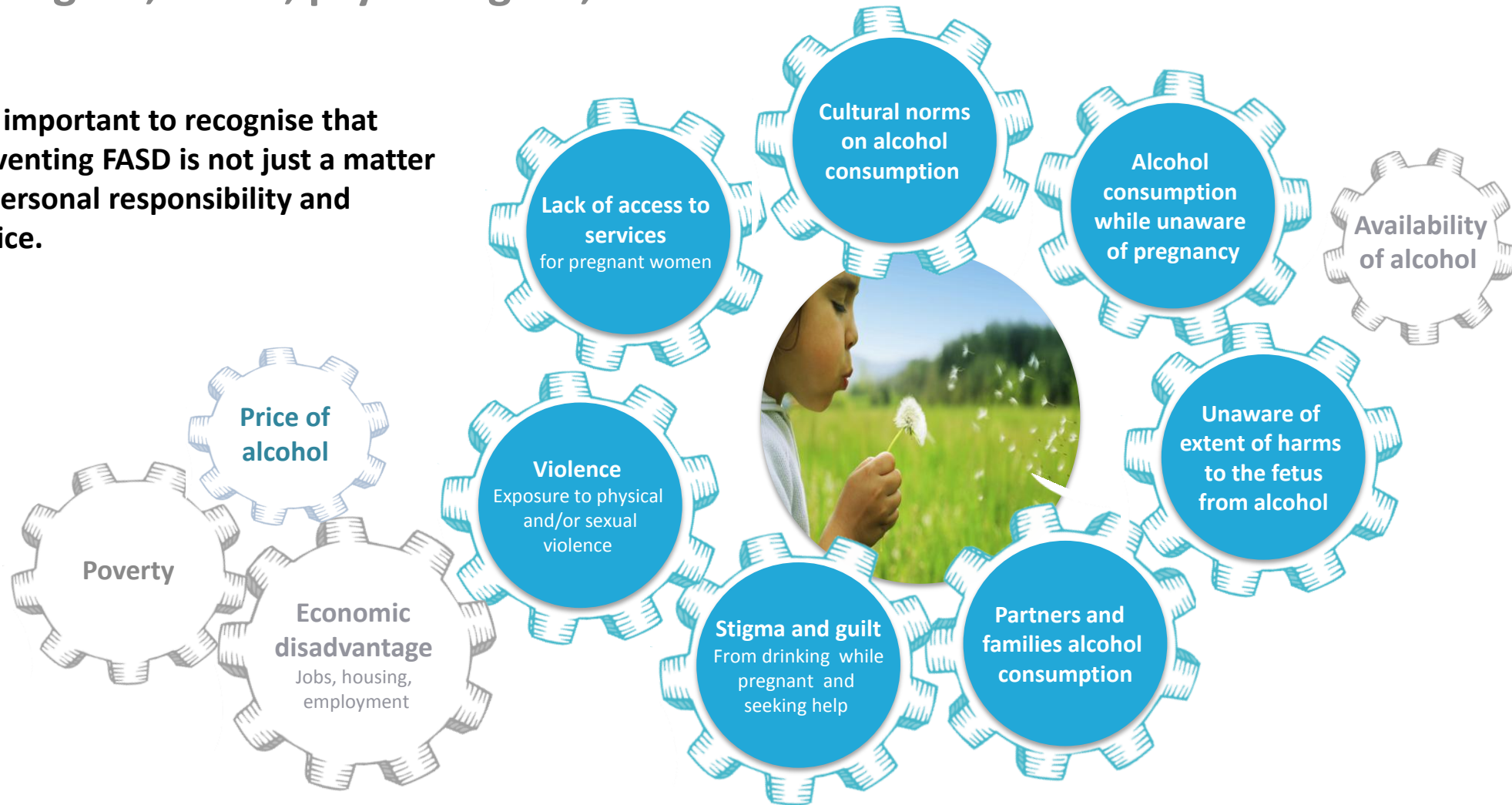
Australia's response to FASD has reached a tipping point in the prevention of FASD and the provision of services to Australian families



FASD is a complex issue that requires greater precision and coordination in the way governments and the community respond.

FASD doesn't occur in isolation - it results from a complex interplay of biological, social, psychological, environmental and economic factors

It is important to recognise that preventing FASD is not just a matter of personal responsibility and choice.



A whole-of-government response is required to bring together support from a range of sectors including health, employment, education, justice, Indigenous, community and housing.

A National FASD Action Plan is needed that coordinates action across different sectors and across all Australian jurisdictions

The essential elements of a plan are:



Improve diagnostic ability

Diagnosis rates for FASD are low. To improve this the following is needed: a standardised diagnostic tool, services for people to receive a diagnosis and training for health professionals on FASD and use of diagnostic tool.



Reduce overall alcohol consumption of Australian women

Fundamental to preventing FASD is reducing the harmful consumption of alcohol in the general population by: funding ongoing public education campaigns, implementing mandatory warning labels and ensuring all health professionals ask women about their alcohol consumption.



Empower people with FASD to fully participate in society

Access to disability support services and early intervention programs are crucial in preventing the development of further disability and hardship for people with FASD. Access to early intervention services will result in better outcomes for those affected throughout their lives.



Improve data collection to understand true extent of FASD in the Australian community

The prevalence of FASD in Australia is largely unknown and believed to be significantly underreported. Clear actions are required to standardise data on alcohol consumption during pregnancy and on the collection and collation of data once a FASD diagnosis has been made.

Proposing a National FASD Action Plan should be the main outcome of the Inquiry.

There are opportunities to fund early action in the 2013/14 budget which will capitalise on the gathering momentum

The Committee should issue an interim report to catch the 2013/14 budget cycle

Funding to finalise diagnostic tool and guidelines

In 2010 the Department of Health and Ageing provided \$450,000 in funding to develop 'Screening and Diagnostic Instrument for FASD'. Guidelines on the use of the tool need finalising.

Fund piloting of diagnostic tool in two clinical settings

The tool needs to be evaluated in two different environments: FASD Clinic, Westmead Children's Hospital, Sydney and the Child Development Service at Princess Margaret Hospital, Perth.

Expand 'Better Start' initiative to include FASD

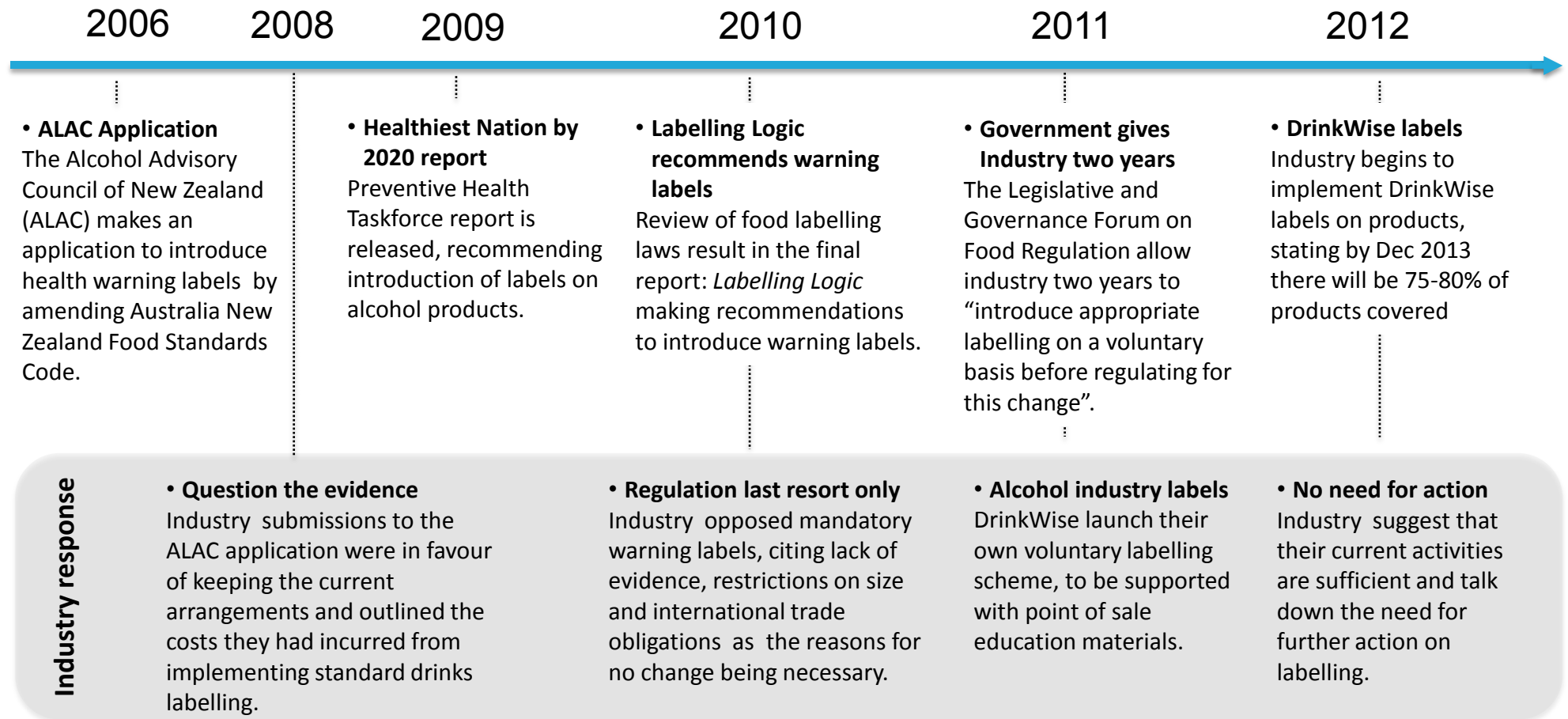
The 'Better Start for Children with Disability' initiative assists eligible children with early intervention programs and allied health professional services. Adding FASD would not be cost prohibitive (as few children have a FASD diagnosis), but would greatly benefit those assisted.

Public education campaign and mandate warning labels

Fundamental to reducing prenatal exposure to alcohol is the reduction of harmful alcohol consumption in the general population. Public education and pregnancy warning labels would help to reduce overall alcohol consumption and help to prevent future cases of FASD.

Despite public commitments to prevent and address FASD, governments have been dragging their feet in some areas.

The alcohol industry has been successful in delaying the introduction of evidence-based alcohol warning labels despite repeated recommendations



To prevent even one more case of FASD, consistent, coordinated action is needed to change the current system.

This Inquiry has the opportunity to describe a clear vision and set the path for effective and sustained action

