



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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Wanted: a national strategy on Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

In its submission to the House of Representatives, the Alliance has called for a specific national strategy for the prevention and management of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are 100 per cent preventable: if alcohol is not consumed, the baby will not have FASD. The condition has immense consequences for families and society, as well as for affected individuals. And yet, even with increased knowledge about the condition and its causes, there are still children being born who are alcohol-affected.

The Alliance proposes that the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs should support the development of a national strategy, to be agreed and prosecuted by all health jurisdictions, to prevent children from being affected by FASD. Although it is a lifetime disability, early diagnosis and appropriate intervention can make a positive difference to the life of the person affected and to the lives of their parents.

The strategy could effect a cultural shift in overall attitudes towards pregnancy and alcohol, and in the role of partners and fathers as active agents of support for healthy pregnancies. Foetal alcohol is not just 'a woman's problem'.

The strategy would accommodate the particular characteristics of rural and remote areas, in which there is a significant prevalence of FASD. It will target effective measures for early identification and ongoing management to selected population groups, including pregnant women, women of child-bearing age generally, 'at risk' groups such as young people, women with an alcohol dependency and the male partners of women in these groups.

This targeting will be undertaken through a range of measures, including generic health promotion and information within the community, training and support for clinicians, and whole-of-government work to improve the determinants of health and wellbeing.

Much could be achieved through greater knowledge of and adherence to guidelines on the consumption of alcohol.

To read the full Submission please see www.ruralhealth.org.au under Publications.

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