



Senator Rachel Siewert
Committee Chair
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs

Dear Senator Siewert

The Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Inquiry into Effective Approaches to Prevention, Diagnosis and Support for Fetal 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 and Other Drug issues.

DANA recognizes that Fetal 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.

With reference to previous and ongoing work in this area, DANA continues to support:

- a holistic strategic approach to FASD
- increasing awareness of the National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines to reduce risk from drinking alcohol, with a particular focus on guideline four on maternal alcohol consumption
- 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
- 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 areas 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 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 identified 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 anything raised in this submission.

Darren Smyth President DANA

26 November 2019

Attached: DANA Position Statement on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (2017)