



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a condition caused by alcohol exposure before birth. It is a life-long condition that results in **cognitive, physical and behavioural disabilities**, including **difficulties** with:



- learning
- language



- planning
- memory



- motor skills
- controlling emotions

Not all babies exposed to alcohol during pregnancy will develop FASD, but there is no safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy.

Early diagnosis of FASD is vital to supporting families, but sometimes shame and stigma can stop families from seeking help.

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy is a concern for all Australians. In 2019^[1]:

55% of women in the total population reported drinking alcohol before they knew they were pregnant.

15% continued to drink after they knew they were pregnant.

In 2018-19, around 9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women reported alcohol use during pregnancy^[2].

While alcohol use is less common among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women than non-Indigenous women, for those who do drink – alcohol use is more likely to be at a risky level.

It is not known how many people in Australia have FASD

FASD is preventable



To prevent FASD, it is important that:

- communities have a say on liquor licences
- partners and family members support women during pregnancy
- culturally safe programs and resources are accessible to encourage families to get the support they need.



However, **more needs to be done to increase awareness and understanding of FASD** and how it affects the whole community.

Information and support:

- Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
- FASD Hub
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Registry
- Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet Alcohol and other Drugs Knowledge Centre

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020). *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & National Indigenous Australians Agency (2020). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework report*. Retrieved 9/12/2020 from <https://www.indigenouphpf.gov.au>



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Please see the review for a full reference list.

Artwork: *Feeding the Family Pets* by Brian Robinson