



## MEDIA RELEASE

### NT GOVERNMENT URGED TO ACT ON YEAR-OLD FASD REPORT

**18 April 2016:** Health experts are calling for the Northern Territory (NT) Government to do more to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and to act on the recommendations made by the Legislative Assembly Inquiry more than a year ago.

Ms Caterina Giorgi, Director of Policy and Research at the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), will today discuss the current FASD policy landscape in Australia and present the case for urgent action at the national 'Caring for Country Kids' conference being held in Alice Springs.

FASD is an umbrella term for the range of lifelong learning, behavioural and developmental disabilities which result from alcohol exposure during pregnancy.

The spotlight on this issue comes at an opportune time for the territory, after it was raised in the NT Legislative Assembly last month; with members beginning to question why the final report from the Select Committee on Action to Prevent FASD has not yet been debated.

In February 2015, the committee tabled a comprehensive report in Parliament, *The preventable disability*, which found that FASD is having a devastating effect on the lives of many people in the community and set out 26 recommendations for action.

However, 14 months later, the NT Government is still yet to act on the report or respond to a single recommendation.

Ms Giorgi says that to date, the progress and implementation of much needed FASD policies and programs in the NT has been unacceptably slow and non-existent.

"Many Australian states and territories have taken action to prevent, manage and diagnose FASD over the last five years and there is an increased awareness of the need to take a whole of community approach to FASD. But the NT Government is dragging its feet in responding to the FASD Inquiry report and is fixated on punitive approaches that ignore the evidence," says Ms Giorgi.

FASD has been on the agenda for the NT for five years, with a working group established in 2011 and the parliamentary committee appointed in 2014. But despite the final report concluding that the "prevention of, and treatment for, FASD is both a moral and an economic imperative" – there has disappointingly been no further developments.

"This is not a problem without solutions, FASD is preventable and we cannot afford not to act. The Northern Territory urgently needs to respond to the committee's year-old report and outline what actions it will undertake to comprehensively address FASD in the region," said Ms Giorgi.

The Caring for Country Kids conference, hosted by the Children's Healthcare Australasia and the National Rural Health Alliance, brings together frontline healthcare professionals, policymakers and researchers to discuss ways to enhance the health and wellbeing of young people living in rural, regional and remote communities across Australia.



Foundation for Alcohol  
Research & Education

Ms Giorgi will chair a dedicated FASD stream at the event, with presentations from experts in the field including Ms Vicki Russell, CEO of the National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (NOFASD) Australia, and Dr John Boffa, Alice Springs GP and member of the People's Alcohol Action Coalition.

ENDS

### **Media notes**

The Caring for Country Kids conference session '*Baby steps: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) policy in Australia*', supported by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), will be held from 3.25pm on Monday 18 April 2016 at the Alice Springs Convention Centre, Northern Territory.

[Visit the Caring for Country Kids Conference website](#)

[View the NT FASD committee's final report: \*The preventable disability\*](#)

### **Ms Caterina Giorgi is available for interview.**

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. Over 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.