The Lililwan Collaboration: Inquiry into Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, 23rd March, 2012.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Liliwan Project is a prevalence study on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in the Fitzroy Valley. It is part of the Marulu strategy developed by the Aboriginal community to address the diagnosis and prevention of FASD and provide support for families of affected children. The partners in The Liliwan Collaboration are Marninwarntikura Women’s Resource Centre and Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services in the Fitzroy Valley and The George Institute for Global Health and The Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney.

We are grateful to Alina McDonald and Anne-Marie Feyer from The Chalmers Centre for Partnerships in Healthcare Innovation (at The George Institute for Global Health) for advice on research in a policy perspective and translation.

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This article should be cited as follows:

Cover Image: Bruce Hunt, Revolver.

1 Liliwan is a Kimberley Kriol word meaning “all the little ones”. Marulu is a Bunuba word meaning “precious, worth nurturing”.

The Liliwan Project Collaboration
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As foreshadowed in The Liliwan Project Collaboration’s preliminary submission dated 8th December 2011, this document expands on its overall recommendations and highlights a specific opportunity that could be harnessed now to advance the prevention, diagnosis and management of FASD in Australia.

The present submission uses the expertise of The Liliwan Project Collaboration to offer a multifaceted approach to progress the FASD agenda in Australia. We recognise that progressing the agenda nationally is a complex undertaking and will involve significant commitment of time, energy and resources. At the same time, our experience suggests that it is possible to build momentum for the larger scale endeavour from smaller scale local success.

In this submission we outline a potential path to achieving a cohesive, national approach that is evidence-based, effective, and community owned. The path is based on a convergence of iterative local successes with larger scale national action. The purpose of this submission is to harness the full continuum of opportunities for impact as part of the development of a national approach to intervention, prevention and management of FASD in Australian communities.

Alongside development of the national agenda we propose to:

- raise national awareness of FASD
- consolidate a national reference group
- engage with key national stakeholders
- capitalise on the successes of The Liliwan Project

The approach used in The Liliwan Project for diagnosis of FASD and development of an individual management plan for affected children, provides a model that is widely recognised as best practice.

Our plan builds on the lessons learned and achievements of The Liliwan Project. An evaluation of the interdisciplinary model of care used in this project is timely, as is its trial in appropriate settings outside the Fitzroy Valley.

In taking the next steps The Liliwan Project Collaboration would welcome the support of colleagues and other organisations who have an interest in FASD, many of whom have highlighted the Fitzroy Valley model in their submissions to the Inquiry Committee.

The Liliwan Project Collaboration remains committed to supporting the Inquiry and assisting the Commonwealth Government to address the challenges of FASD.
INTRODUCTION

Position

Scope of this submission

As foreshadowed in The Liliwan Project Collaboration’s preliminary submission dated 8th December 2011 (see Appendix A), this document expands on the overall recommendations and highlights a specific opportunity that could be harnessed now to advance the prevention and management of FASD in Australia.

The preliminary submission (found at: http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=spila/fasd/subs.htm) provided an overview of the key challenges of FASD in Australia and made a suite of overall recommendations against the Inquiry Terms of Reference. The submissions of other key stakeholders and colleagues – The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), The Australian FASD Collaboration, the Australian Human Rights Commission, Blake Dawson, The Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and the Rural Health Alliance to name several - are welcomed and cover essential ground across the Terms of Reference. In particular, FARE’s call for a National FASD Plan to map out responsibilities, priorities and targets is one supported by this submission.

The Liliwan Project Collaboration intends to engage actively in ongoing discussion of such a plan. In the spirit of identifying high priority opportunities, the present submission draws the attention of the Inquiry Committee to the success of a community-initiated model for diagnosis and management of FASD that was put in place in Fitzroy Crossing for the Liliwan Project and, to the fact that the potential of the model is well recognised by others. One recommendation of the FARE submission is the need to:

“Develop culturally specific prevention, intervention and management strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are supported and managed by local communities. These strategies should be based on current good practice examples such as the ‘Marulu Strategy’ in Western Australia.”

Perhaps most importantly, this submission aims to outline an approach for capitalising on the success drivers of the Fitzroy Valley model, and the opportunity the model presents for ‘quick wins’ within a broader and longer-term framework of national action on FASD.

Value Proposition

The community-initiated model of diagnosis and management of FASD trialled in the Indigenous communities of the Kimberley’s Fitzroy Valley is a unique mix of community drive and engagement with academic and health expertise. The Liliwan Project Collaboration has successfully brought current medical knowledge to assess and begin to address the challenges of FASD in the Fitzroy Valley. The model was built from first principles with the initiative, support, consent and engagement of the community and its leaders.

The project is “a genuine partnership - one where research is done with the community and not just about the community”

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2 Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education. Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: Inquiry into Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, 2011

The ability and reputation of this group to provide academic expertise (EE, JL, JF) is evidenced by the Inquiry Committee's request to them for background materials. Australian publications relating to FASD were provided with the preliminary submission (see Appendix B). In addition, the team includes Aboriginal people (JO, MC) able to provide cultural context for the work. Beyond research, the project team is able to provide real world experience of a model for engaging all voices in the solution – across many stakeholders and disciplines, nationally and internationally – that is, most importantly community-owned and driven. The clinical team consists of a paediatrician, occupational therapist, clinical psychologist, physiotherapist, speech therapist and local Aboriginal People (Community Navigators) with local language skills and trained in research techniques (Appendix C).

A partnering of the Fitzroy Valley community with researchers at The George Institute and The University of Sydney is “setting an example to the rest of Australia of how to best approach Indigenous Affairs. A process guided by a relationship underpinned by meaningful, respectful engagement and collaboration.”

There is a unique opportunity to capitalise on this existing model, utilising the academic and Aboriginal expertise of The Liliwan Project Collaboration. The transferable lessons and key success drivers of The Liliwan Project need to be captured in a robust and comprehensive evaluation. The evaluation would provide the starting point for mobilising implementation and evaluation of the model of care in other communities in Australia. The design of an evaluation should build in opportunities for feedback that would provide essential evidence and insight to policy makers and the communities themselves while a broader and longer term National FASD Plan is designed and implemented. Suggested next steps are outlined later in this document.

“The Marulu Project for overcoming FASD and early life trauma in the Fitzroy Valley will have far-reaching implications which need to be taken up by all agencies and services.”

OVERALL PICTURE

Background

The condition

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are tragic but preventable outcomes of exposure to alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol exposure in-utero may result in a range of disorders that include brain injury, birth defects and lifelong learning, and behavioural and mental health issues. FASD are the most common causes of preventable intellectual impairment. Affected individuals also face a range of secondary disabilities as adults including unemployment, mental illness, alcohol and substance abuse and contact with the justice system. Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) have characteristic facial features and may also have birth defects enabling relatively easy diagnosis. However, a larger group of children in the FASD spectrum have neuro-developmental problems in the absence of facial or physical features and the diagnosis in these children is more difficult.

\[4\] Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. In: 2010 Social Justice Report Australian Human Rights Commission 2011. ISSN 1837-6428 (Print) and ISSN 1837-6436 (On-line)


Size of the problem

Service development and prevention depends on understanding the size of the problem of FASD. FASD prevalence in Australia has not been accurately determined. Past studies have been hampered by under-recognition and under-reporting. A high quality prevalence study is underway in the Fitzroy Valley - a high risk community (The Lililwan Project). The results of this study will be applicable to other communities in Australia with similar patterns of alcohol use.

The Lililwan Project

At a Women’s Bush Meeting in 2008 the Fitzroy Valley communities identified the need to address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) – the legacy of alcohol use in pregnancy - as an issue of particular concern7. In October 2008 a FASD leadership team was formed and in November 2008 they embraced a ‘circle of friends’ - partners in government, business and community organisations - and developed a strategy to address FASD. The strategy, called Marulu includes diagnosis and prevention of FASD, community education, and support for parents and carers of affected children8. Marulu is a word in the Bunuba language meaning “precious, worth nurturing”.

In 2009 Indigenous leaders in Fitzroy Valley (Kimberley, WA) initiated a research partnership between Nindjilaŋgarrir Cultural Health Services and Marninwarntikura Women’s Resource Centre (both at Fitzroy Crossing), The George Institute for Global Health and The University of Sydney Medical School to conduct the first Australian study of FASD prevalence, which they called The Lililwan Project7. Lililwan is a Kriol (Aboriginal English) word meaning “all the little ones”.

Stage 1 of the project (2009-11), funded by a philanthropist, included development and use of a medical history checklist to obtain information about antenatal exposures, early life trauma, health and development from parents and carers of all children born in 2002 or 2003. Stage 2 involves multi-disciplinary assessment of the health and development of these children and is funded by the Commonwealth (DOHA, FaHCSIA and Save the Children). Pro bono support has been provided by Ashurst (formerly Blake Dawson Solicitors), M&CSaatchi and The Australian Human Rights Commission.

The project will enable us to estimate the prevalence of FASD and other health problems and to develop individual treatment plans for children. The project includes community education, support for parents and carers and advice for teachers. It provides opportunities for capacity building in the community, including training and employment of local Aboriginal people. The unique data from the project will enable the community to advocate for improved health, community and education services.

The project demonstrates the importance of community led research. Australia’s Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda, described the project as “a genuine partnership - one where research is done with the community and not just about the community,” saying it is “setting an example to the rest of Australia” being a process “guided by a relationship underpinned by meaningful, respectful engagement and collaboration.”

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Overall Recommendations to the inquiry

The following recommendations – highlighted in our preliminary submission (see Appendix A) - target the broader challenges of FASD and the types of issues that would be incorporated in the National FASD Plan. We note that these concur with the suggestions in submissions from colleagues. We have highlighted the priority issues.

Prevention strategies

- Develop and implement a national public health campaign to raise awareness of the harms of alcohol use in pregnancy, commencing at school age. In addition, targeted information for high-risk groups should be provided. Promote the use of film in advocacy
- Fund high quality research evaluating prevention strategies to reduce alcohol use in pregnancy
- Improve access to services for women with alcohol dependency, and women using alcohol during pregnancy (and their partners)
- Educate health professionals to recognise women at risk and to use strategies to prevent alcohol use in pregnancy
- Encourage the uptake of National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia (NHMRC) guidelines on alcohol use in pregnancy and in women planning pregnancy
- Restrict access to alcohol e.g. through volumetric taxes, community-initiated restrictions (e.g. legislated ‘dry’ communities, restrictions on strength of take-away alcohol), responsible marketing and sale of alcohol products
- Legislate for warning labels on alcohol products and in licensed premises in relation to alcohol use in pregnancy. Labels should be easily legible, contain a clear meaning and should indicate the number of standard drinks per beverage
- Provide contraception advice for women of childbearing age who are drinking at risky levels

Intervention needs

- Adopt the Australian FASD Collaboration’s recommendations regarding an Australian FASD diagnostic and screening tool and explore the rationale and content of a screening tool
- Embed FASD education and prevention messages in all undergraduate and postgraduate health related curricula
- Educate health professionals in diagnosis of FASD and assessment of health and developmental needs of affected children
- Improve the capacity of existing child development units and paediatric services to diagnose and manage FASD
- Evaluate the feasibility of the interdisciplinary model of FASD diagnosis and management used in The Liliwan Project (in the Fitzroy Valley) and assess its potential for application in other Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities
- Invest in high quality research evaluating treatments for FASD
- Implement evidence-based therapies for FASD as they become available
- Encourage State and Territory Education and Justice Departments to acknowledge and develop policy on FASD management
- Review State and Territory eligibility criteria for carer’s allowance, disability allowance, and in school support to enable access for children with FASD
Train teachers to understand the impact of FASD on learning, behaviour and educational attainment, and develop strategies for classroom management

Management

- Fund and evaluate the Collaborative Community Circle of Care model developed in the Fitzroy Valley for support of families and children with FASD and provision of community education and support
- Engage agencies including health, education, justice and policing, disability services, child protection, employment and training and housing to recognise the issue of FASD, and consider alternative education, training and employment pathways across the lifespan, such as therapeutic economies being developed in the Fitzroy Valley for people with FASD
- Review international best practice management strategies to inform management strategies for Australia

As well as considering the broad landscape, our preliminary submission briefly canvassed the potential of the Liliwan Project to provide opportunities for immediate progress across the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

Box 1 highlights recommendations from the preliminary submission that relate more directly to the model developed in the Liliwan Project. The remainder of our follow-up submission considers these in more detail.

**Box 1 – Priority recommendations from preliminary submission**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Terms of Reference (TOR)</th>
<th>Priority Recommendations – Opportunity for Progress now</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention Strategies</td>
<td><em>Develop</em> and implement a national public health campaign to raise awareness of the harms of alcohol use in pregnancy, commencing at school age. Maintain alcohol restrictions in forcing remote communities, these being important to limit access to alcohol. In addition, targeted information for high-risk groups should be provided. Promote the use of film in advocacy. (Also see below under engagement opportunities)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Needs</td>
<td><em>Evaluate</em> the feasibility of the interdisciplinary model of FASD diagnosis and management used in the Liliwan Project (in the Fitzroy Valley) and assess its potential application in other remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td><em>Fund</em> and evaluate the Collaborative Community Circle of Care model developed in the Fitzroy Valley for support of families and children with FASD and community education and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Engage</em> agencies including health, education, justice and policing, disability services, child protection, employment and training and housing to recognise the issue of FASD, and consider alternative education, training and employment pathways (such as therapeutic economies being developed in the Fitzroy Valley) for people with FASD across the lifespan.</td>
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A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY: CONVERGENCE OF LOCAL IMPACT AND NATIONAL ACTION

“Local people are saying that the valley has already lost one generation to alcohol abuse. Without decisive action now, it stands to lose a second generation.”

The major focus of this submission uses the expertise of The Liliwan Project team to offer a multifaceted approach to progress the FASD agenda. With others who have made submissions, we recognise that progressing the agenda nationally is a complex undertaking, involving significant commitment of time, energy and resources. At the same time, our experience suggests that it is possible to build momentum for the larger scale endeavour from aggregation of smaller scale local success, building in ‘quick wins’ along the way.

Simultaneously, governments must progress legislation to ensure that measures that have been proven to decrease alcohol use (eg: taxation, minimum pricing, restricted advertising and limiting access) are introduced.

The purpose of this submission is to offer a potential plan to harness the full continuum of opportunities for impact as part of the development of a national approach to intervention, prevention and management of FASD in Australian communities. The fundamental premise of our proposition is that achieving a cohesive, evidence-based, effective and community owned approach for FASD is based on a convergence of iterative local successes with larger scale national action.

Figure 1 provides a schematic representation of developing a national approach for FASD, based on convergence of local, national and international action. Briefly, the high level blueprint we envisage can be seen as having three chronological phases. These are not meant to represent discrete timelines, but rather to signal that the national plan is underpinned by a necessary timeframe, ranging from the immediate to the longer term. Below we describe the potential intersecting lines of activity that across time, will contribute to immediate (‘quick wins’), medium-term and longer term success in developing a national approach to FASD. Activity is described at a high level to illustrate the sorts of component parts of building the national approach, based on our experience, and acknowledging the recommendations made by our colleagues.

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A Blueprint for Convergence of Local Impact and National Action for FASD

Development and Establishment of a NATIONAL FASD Agenda and Action Plan

RAISE AWARENESS:
e.g. education programs & films

NATIONAL COORDINATION:
Consolidate a National Reference Group

NATIONAL ACTION:
Engage with key stakeholders e.g. Parliamentary Inquiry

CAPITALISE ON SUCCESS:
Lessons from the Liliwan Project

DEVELOP A NATIONAL PLAN:
e.g. Prevalence studies

e.g. National partnerships for Action (Community, academic and govt)

CAPITLISE AND GROW:
Implementation of model of care in 3 communities

IMPLEMENT:
The National Approach

Cycles of Evaluation

Cycles of Evaluation

Cycles of Evaluation

A NATIONAL APPROACH

COHESIVE

EFFECTIVE

EVIDENCE-BASED

COMMUNITY OWNED

Intervention
Prevention
Management

Opportunities for LOCAL impact to inform the National Approach

2012/13

Quick wins

Mid-term

Longer-term

Timeframe

The Liliwan Project Collaboration
Phase 1 – Developing the National FASD AGENDA

The first phase of building the national approach for FASD is likely to be concerned with developing a cohesive national agenda. The four key streams of work in this first phase will be around raising awareness, establishing national coordination mechanisms, establishing national action mechanisms and feeding in the lessons from The Liliwan Project (see Figure 1).

Raising awareness

This stream of work will include a range of educational and communication campaigns. These are likely to use a range of media, and tailor messages for a range of important target groups. For example, during the course of The Liliwan Project documentaries entitled ‘Marulu’11 and ‘Tristan’ were developed to raise awareness of FASD. ‘Tristan’ will be launched by the Governor General of Australia in Sydney in April 2012 and shown at the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the United Nations Headquarter in New York, 7-18 May 2012.

“Tristan will show the challenges faced by a child and his family who are living with FASD.”12

National coordination

A core theme agreed among colleagues in this field, and reflected in most submissions is the absolute need for a national group to drive the development of the approach to FASD. Necessarily this group will need to represent a range of key interests, but also a range of expertise. An existing national group, the Australian FASD Collaboration (Appendix D) might be appropriate to form the basis of the to-be-convened national coordination body, named the FASD National Advisory Council for descriptive purposes in this submission. This group will need to include government members, academics, clinicians, researchers, community representatives, parents, advocates and a range of health professionals. The role of this group would be to drive the development of the national approach. They should be charged with responsibility for detailed action planning, refinements in approach, setting of and reporting against key performance indicators and bringing to bear the best evidence available to inform the national approach to FASD including service delivery research, prevention, advocacy and support for families living with FASD.

National action

In the Australian context, ‘national action’ certainly requires formal buy-in of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. As well as formal arrangements across governments, engagement across portfolios, across health and community service professionals and across communities is critical to successfully mobilising a national approach. Comprehensive stakeholder engagement is a foundation of the development of a national approach. Development and execution of the stakeholder engagement strategy will need time and resources to be successful. The National Advisory Council would oversee development and execution of the stakeholder engagement plan.

Capitalising on local success: capturing the lessons of The Liliwan Project

Over decades Aboriginal leaders in the Fitzroy Valley noticed an increasing number of children with special needs and recognised that they had been exposed to alcohol in utero. In collaboration with their partners (The George Institute for Global Health and The University of Sydney) the communities of the Fitzroy Valley have developed and enacted a community-led strategy to prevent, diagnose and manage FASD and to support families caring for affected children. The strategy is called Marulu, a Bunaba language word meaning precious,

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worth nurturing. The Liliwan Project which forms part of this strategy was initiated to determine FASD prevalence in the Fitzroy Valley.

The approach used in The Liliwan Project for diagnosis of FASD and development of an individual management plan for affected children, provides a model that is widely recognised as best practice. The lessons provided by the Project need to be captured, and the general principles distilled to underpin community-led approaches elsewhere. In partnership with the Liliwan Collaboration, an evaluation focused on transferrable lessons should be funded, and overseen by the National Advisory Council.

Recommendation #4: That government and other investments take community direction, backed up by research provided by the Marulu Project team, on what family support and other services need urgent funding in order to prevent early life trauma and FASD.”

Phase 2 – Development of a National FASD Plan

The second phase of the development of a national approach would have two broad areas of focus: the development of the National Plan, and growth of further examples of local success.

Development of the National Plan

The National Advisory Council would oversee the development of a National Plan. There would be a range of sub-activities, defined during the first phase of activities. A specific high priority, referenced in most submissions, is the imperative to improve data collection on FASD in line with standard best practice in public and community health. The ultimate ambition should be to develop and maintain a national data repository. Without these data, it will be difficult for the impact of strategies to be understood and measured.

“Barriers to diagnosis are accentuated in rural, remote and Indigenous communities where access to health services is limited. Lack of identification of FASD means we are unable to quantify the problem and thus lack evidence to advocate for much needed health professional training and diagnostic services.”

Mobilising a data repository of appropriate quality is a longer-term undertaking. In the short to medium term, it is widely agreed that population based prevalence studies should be funded in a range of populations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and a range of settings, urban, rural and remote. The National Advisory Council would oversee the development and execution of major prevalence studies. The results would be used to inform the delivery of the national approach to prevention, intervention and management of FASD.

“The FASD prevalence study will form a key component of the evidence base to advocate for funding and resources to implement remedial projects to address and prevent FASD.”

The development of the National Plan, and its inputs, are likely to rely heavily on a range of National Partnerships for action across communities, academics and Governments. This stream of activity will need to be strategically developed and overseen by the National Advisory Council.

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14 Telethon Institute for Child Health Research Submission to House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
Capitalising and growing local success

The potential value of the Fitzroy Model of diagnosis and management of FASD is well-recognised. Distillation of the transferrable lessons from the model (Phase 1) provide a starting point for the broader roll out of the principles of the model – as articulated in a range of commentary. A stream of work converging on the development of a national approach to investigate the transferability of the model is essential. Accordingly a medium term activity should focus on the implementation and evaluation of the Fitzroy Model of diagnosis and management of FASD in other Australian communities, to ascertain feasibility and requirements. As part of this activity, the National Advisory Council would oversee the development and conduct of the feasibility study. It is likely that advice would be required on such matters as:

- Identifying appropriate demonstration sites and interested communities
- Identifying funding needs and personnel
- Developing appropriate consultation and engagement models
- Implementing the Model in the communities
- Evaluating design and execution

We note the work of the Marulu Project in the Fitzroy Valley (with which the Committee is familiar) and commend the Project to the Inquiry as a model for community devised and driven solutions to community challenges. We suggest projects such as this should be supported as part of any strategy to address FASD rather than government taking a wholly generalised approach to prevention and intervention, given FASD exists in many disparate communities.

Phase 3 – Implementation of a National Approach

Phase 3, the most distal of the phases in the development of the national approach, is less specified. Its features depend entirely on the developments of the earlier phases, and on the converging lines of evidence accumulated. Key principles that will drive effective implementation can be identified; the national approach must be cohesive, evidence based and community owned.

Conclusions

The Inquiry presents an opportunity to consider a comprehensive national approach to a significant health issue that, to date, has not received appropriate attention or service support in Australia. In part the lack of public profile for FASD is the umbrella nature of the diagnosis, and the absence of high quality prevalence data. This submission acknowledges the significant and longer-term nature of the effort that will be required to address the gaps in developing a national approach to the prevention, intervention and management of FASD. However, this submission also highlights that local success with immediate smaller scale outcomes can be marshalled at the same time, and could very effectively feed into, the longer- term developments.

The Liliwan Project Collaboration remains committed to supporting the Inquiry and assisting the Commonwealth Government to address the challenges of FASD.

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17 Blake Dawson
Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: people with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in the disability regime and criminal justice system
APPENDICES

Appendix A – Preliminary Submission 8th December 2011

Preliminary Submission to The House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
Inquiry into Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) on behalf of The Liliwan Collaboration

Prepared by: Prof Elizabeth Elliott, Ms June Oscar, Dr James Fitzpatrick, A/Prof Jane Latimer
on behalf of Ms Maureen Carter and The Liliwan Project Team

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this submission is to:

- Outline the scope of a detailed document we will submit to the Committee by February 17th, 2012,
- Support the presentation we made to the Inquiry Committee on Thursday, 24 November 2011, as recorded in Hansard,
- Supply relevant Australian literature about FASD, as requested by the Committee (attached).

The condition

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are tragic but preventable outcomes of exposure to alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol exposure in-utero may result in a range of disorders that include brain injury, birth defects, lifelong learning, and behavioural and mental health issues. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders are the most common cause of preventable intellectual impairment. Those affected face a range of secondary disabilities as adults including unemployment, mental illness, alcohol and substance abuse and contact with the justice system. Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) have characteristic facial features enabling relatively easy diagnosis. However a larger group of children in the FASD spectrum have neuro-developmental problems in the absence of physical features and the diagnosis of these children is more difficult.

Size of the problem

FASD prevalence in Australia has not been accurately determined. Past studies have been hampered by under-recognition and under-reporting. A high quality prevalence study is underway in the Fitzroy Valley (The Liliwan Project). The results of this study will be applicable to other communities in Australia with similar patterns of alcohol use.

Community-led response to FASD

Over decades Aboriginal leaders in the Fitzroy Valley noticed an increasing number of children with different needs and recognised that they had been exposed to alcohol in-utero. In collaboration with their partners (The George Institute for Global Health, and The University of Sydney) the communities of the Fitzroy Valley have led the way in developing community-based strategies to prevent and diagnose FASD and to support families caring for affected children. These strategies demonstrate the critical role of community in developing and owning the approach to addressing the challenges of FASD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prevention Strategies

- Develop and implement a national public health campaign to raise awareness of the harms of alcohol use in pregnancy, commencing at school age. In addition targeted information for high-risk groups should be provided. Promote the use of film in advocacy
- Fund high quality research evaluating prevention strategies to reduce alcohol use in pregnancy
- Improve access to services for women with alcohol dependency, and women using alcohol during pregnancy (and their partners)
- Educate health professionals to recognise women at risk and to use strategies to prevent alcohol use in pregnancy
- Encourage the uptake of NHMRC guidelines on alcohol use in pregnancy
- Restrict access to alcohol e.g. through volumetric taxes, community-initiated restrictions, responsible marketing and sale of alcohol products
-立法为警戒标签在酒精产品和在许可的场所。标签应该也indicate the number of standard drinks per beverage
- Provide contraception advice for women of childbearing age who are drinking at risky levels

Intervention Needs

- Adopt the Australian FASD Collaboration’s recommendations regarding an Australian FASD diagnostic and screening tool
- Embed FASD education and prevention messages in all undergraduate and postgraduate health related curricula
- Educate health professionals in diagnosis of FASD and assessment of health and developmental needs of affected children
- Improve the capacity of existing child development units and paediatric services to diagnose and manage FASD
- Evaluate the feasibility of the interdisciplinary model of FASD diagnosis and management used in The Liliwan Project (in the Fitzroy Valley) for application in other communities
- Invest in high quality research evaluating treatments for FASD
- Implement evidence-based therapies for FASD as they become available
- Encourage State and Territory Education and Justice Departments to acknowledge and develop policy on FASD management
- Review State and Territory eligibility criteria for carer’s allowance, disability allowance, and in school support to enable access for children with FASD
- Train teachers to understand the impact of FASD on learning, behaviour and educational attainment, and strategies for classroom management

The Liliwan Project Collaboration
Management

- Fund and evaluate the Collaborative Community Circle of Care model developed in the Fitzroy Valley for support of families and children with FASD and community education and support
- Engage agencies including health, education, justice and policing, disability services, child protection, employment and training and housing to recognise the issue of FASD, and consider alternative education, training and employment pathways (such as those being developed in the Fitzroy Valley) for people with FASD across the lifespan
- Review international best practice management strategies to inform management strategies for Australia

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- Visit the Fitzroy Valley to consult with the FASD Leadership Team including Marninwarntikura Women’s Resource Centre and Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services
- Consult with member of The Liliwan Project Collaboration
- Consult with the Australian Human Rights Commission (Disability, Social Justice, Sex Discrimination Units) and Blake Dawson Lawyers (Anne Cregan, Robert Todd) regarding legal issues relating to disability status for FASD
- Consult with relevant stakeholders including the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (Prof Carol Bower), consumer groups (NOFASARD, Russell Family Foundation), the National Indigenous Australian FAS Education Network (NIAFSEN), Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)
- Adopt the recommendations from the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs Working Party on FASD Monograph

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Appendix B – Australian Publications relating to FASD

A list of Australian publications relating to FASD.

**Ascertainment of birth defects: the effect on completeness of adding a new source of data.**
Bower C, Silva D, Henderson TR, Ryan A, Rudy E.
PMID: 11115034

**Differing influences on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal neonatal phenotypes: a prospective study.**
Humphrey MD, Holzheimer DJ.
PMID: 11419769

**Prevalence of fetal alcohol syndrome in the Top End of the Northern Territory.**
Harris KR, Bucens IK.
PMID: 12969208

**Fetal alcohol syndrome: diagnosis, epidemiology, and developmental outcomes.**
O’Leary CM.
PMID: 14717994

**FAS in Australia: fact or fiction?**
Elliott EJ, Bower C.
PMID: 14717995

**Health professionals’ knowledge, practice and opinions about fetal alcohol syndrome and alcohol consumption in pregnancy.**
PMID: 16366068

**Use of record linkage to examine alcohol use in pregnancy.**
Burns L, Mattick RP, Cooke M.
PMID: 16573582

**Fetal alcohol syndrome.**
O’Leary C, Bower C, Payne J, Elliott E.
PMID: 16649302

**A retrospective review of self-reported alcohol intake among women attending for antenatal care in Far North Queensland.**
Rimmer C, de Costa C.
PMID: 16704478

**Diagnosis of foetal alcohol syndrome and alcohol use in pregnancy: a survey of paediatricians’ knowledge, attitudes and practice.**
Elliott EJ, Payne J, Haan E, Bower C.
PMID: 17044897
**Alcohol consumption during pregnancy in nonindigenous west Australian women.**
Colvin L, Payne J, Parsons D, Kurinczuk JJ, Bower C.  
Alcohol Clin Exp Res. 2007 Feb;31(2):276-84.  
P/MID: 17250620

**Estimating the prevalence of fetal alcohol syndrome in Victoria using routinely collected administrative data.**
Allen K, Riley M, Goldfeld S, Halliday J.  
P/MID: 17333611

**A review of policies on alcohol use during pregnancy in Australia and other English-speaking countries, 2006.**
O’Leary CM, Heuzenroeder L, Elliott EJ, Bower C.  
P/MID: 17484709

**Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote Far North Queensland: findings of the Paediatric Outreach Service.**
Rothstein J, Hazlewood R, Fraser M; Paediatric Outreach Service.  
P/MID: 17516899

**Fetal alcohol syndrome: a prospective national surveillance study.**
Elliott EJ, Payne J, Morris A, Haan E, Bower C.  
P/MID: 17704098

**A review of policies on alcohol use during pregnancy in Australia and other English-speaking countries, 2006. Comment.**
Morley R, Halliday JL, Donath SM.  
P/MID: 17767442

**A review of policies on alcohol use during pregnancy in Australia and other English-speaking countries, 2006. Comment.**
Miers S.  
P/MID: 17879459

**Impacts of alcohol use in pregnancy--the role of the GP.**
Peadon E, O'Leary C, Bower C, Elliott E.  
P/MID: 18043782

**International survey of diagnostic services for children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.**
Peadon E, Fremantle E, Bower C, Elliott EJ.  
P/MID: 18412975

**Alcohol and pregnancy: the pivotal role of the obstetrician.**
Elliott EJ, Bower C.  
P/MID: 18532952
Pregnancy characteristics of women giving birth to children with fetal alcohol syndrome in Far North Queensland.

The effect of maternal alcohol consumption on fetal growth and preterm birth.

Need to establish a national diagnostic capacity for foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Systematic review of interventions for children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

Measurement and classification of prenatal alcohol exposure and child outcomes: time for improvement.
O’Leary CM, Bower C. Addiction. 2009 Aug;104(8):1275-6; discussion 1279-80. PMID: 19624317

A new method of prenatal alcohol classification accounting for dose, pattern and timing of exposure: improving our ability to examine fetal effects from low to moderate alcohol.

Age at diagnosis of birth defects.

Women’s knowledge and attitudes regarding alcohol consumption in pregnancy: a national survey.

Peadon E, Elliott EJ. Neuropsychiatr Dis Treat. 2010 Sep 7;6:509-15. PMID: 20856914

RE-AIM evaluation of the Alcohol and Pregnancy Project: educational resources to inform health professionals about prenatal alcohol exposure and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
Paediatricians' knowledge, attitudes and practice following provision of educational resources about prevention of prenatal alcohol exposure and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Changes in health professionals' knowledge, attitudes and practice following provision of educational resources about prevention of prenatal alcohol exposure and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Health initiatives by Indigenous people in Australia.
Clark S. Lancet. 2011 Jun 18;377(9783):2066-7. PMID: 21684368

Attitudes and behaviour predict women's intention to drink alcohol during pregnancy: the challenge for health professionals.

Guidelines for pregnancy: What's an acceptable risk, and how is the evidence (finally) shaping up?

Blunting the legacy of alcohol abuse in Western Australia.

There’s hope in the valley.

The Liliwan Project: study protocol for a population based, active case ascertainment study of the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in remote Australian Aboriginal communities.
Appendix C – The Lililwan Project Team

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**Additional Paediatric Support**
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Gemma

Kaiser
Sinclair

The Lililwan Project Collaboration
Appendix D – The Australian FASD Collaboration

The Australian FASD Collaboration

Contracted by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing to provide a Screening-Diagnostic Instrument for the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Members
Carol Bower1, Elizabeth J Elliott 2,3, Raewyn C Mutch1,4, Janet M Payne1, Jane Latimer5, Elizabeth Russell6, James Fitzpatrick7, Lorain Hayes7, Lucinda Burns8, Jane Halliday9, Heather A D’Antoine10, Amanda Wilkins1,4, Elizabeth Peason2,3, Sue Miers11, Maureen Carter12, Colleen O’Leary11,13, Anne McKenzie1, Rochelle E Watkins1, Heather M Jones1

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5 The George Institute for Global Health, Sydney, Australia
6 Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association, Cairns, Australia
7 Centre for Chronic Disease, School of Medicine, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
8 National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
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10 Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin, Australia
11 National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Related Disorders, Adelaide, Australia
12 Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, Fitzroy, Australia
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