

**Research in a corrective setting:
The Banksia Hill Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Project**

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Outline

- What is FASD?
- Why study FASD and justice?
- Banksia Hill FASD Project




Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

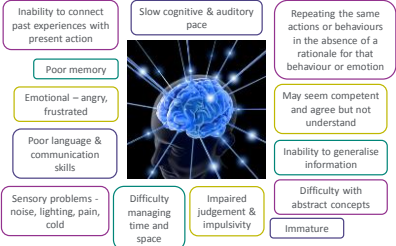
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a non-diagnostic term or 'umbrella term' which refers to a range of conditions caused by prenatal exposure alcohol (PAE)




The effects of fetal alcohol exposure are life-long and may not be seen at birth



What are the impairments?



- Inability to connect past experiences with present action
- Poor memory
- Emotional – angry, frustrated
- Poor language & communication skills
- Sensory problems - noise, lighting, pain, cold
- Slow cognitive & auditory pace
- Repeating the same actions or behaviours in the absence of a rationale for that behaviour or emotion
- May seem competent and agree but not understand
- Inability to generalise information
- Difficulty with abstract concepts
- Immature
- Impaired judgement & impulsivity



These impairments can lead to secondary disabilities such as...

- Problems at school
- Multiple foster care placements
- Reduced self-esteem and depression
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour (victim & perpetrator)
- Problems with alcohol and other drugs
- Difficulty planning, setting goals, being on time and complying with child protection or legal obligations
- Inability to live independently
- Unemployment
- Poverty
- Trouble with the law



FASD in the Justice System – international evidence

- 2011 systematic review - 19x greater risk of individual with FASD to be incarcerated¹
- Canadian data – 23% youth in juvenile detention had FASD²
- US data – of individuals with FASD, 60% had contact with the law³

References
 1. Popover et al, 2011
 2. Fast, Conroy, Lock, 1999
 3. Struisguth et al, 2004



In Australia?

No Australian data
 Groundswell of support for action

- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Doing Time - Time for Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system*. 2011, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra.
- Education and Health Standing Committee, *Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: the invisible disability*, in *Western Australia Parliament Legislative Assembly Committees: Education and Health Standing Committee Report No. 15*. 2012, Legislative Assembly Perth.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, *FASD: The Hidden Harm*. 2012, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra.
- Youth Justice Think Tank, *The report and recommendations of the 2012 Youth Justice Think Tank: Building a more effective youth justice system in WA*. 2013, Youth Affairs Council of WA, Youth Legal Service and Western Australian Council of Social Services: Perth.
- Lawyers, court officers, DCS, Aboriginal leaders, parents and carers



"In summary, people who suffer from FASD are likely to be predisposed to offending behaviour, and they are likely to be significantly disadvantaged at virtually every point in the criminal justice system.

It is, I think, poignant to recall that people suffer from this condition through no fault of their own. There is, I think, room for the view that our current processes do not fairly and justly deal with people who suffer from this condition."

Chief Justice Wayne Martin, Chief Justice of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 20 June 2012



Banksia Hill FASD Project



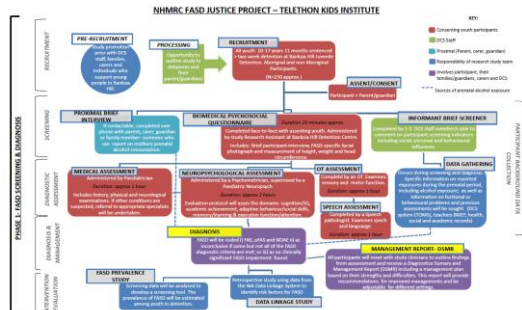
Objectives:

- Establish the first Australian estimate of FASD in young people in detention
- Provide a workforce development strategy for correctional staff that will support a model of management for young people with FASD in detention
- Ethics approval:
 - Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC) approval (HREC Approval Number: 582)
 - Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), University of Western Australia (HREC Approval Number: RA/4/1/7116)



Setting up the study

- Collaboration
- Consultation
- Flexibility
- Acknowledgement of complexities of environment
- Support for study staff



Eligibility Criteria

- **Sentenced** at Banksia Hill Detention Centre
- Minimum age 10 years, maximum age 17 years and 11 months
- Minimum sentence length is two weeks
- Informed assent from the young person
- Written informed consent from parent/guardian
- Deemed suitable for the research project by Banksia Hill staff
- Access to translators if English is not their first language



What does the study involve?

- Key informant
 - survey (prenatal alcohol)
- Young person
 - Facial photo, height, weight, HC and interview
 - Multidisciplinary clinical assessments
- Review of medical and other records



Multidisciplinary Assessment

- **Medical examination**
 - Completed by Paediatrician
- **Neuropsychological assessment**
 - Completed by Provisional Psychologist
 - ESI and SAE assessments available
 - Domains assessed include:
 - Cognition/IQ
 - Academic Achievement
 - Adaptive Behaviour/social skills
 - Memory/Learning
 - Executive Functioning/Abstract reasoning
 - Behavioural rating indicating likely presence of ADHD
- **Speech and Language Assessment**
 - Completed by Speech Pathologist
 - ESI, SAE and AE assessments available
- **Sensory and Motor Assessment**
 - Completed by Occupational Therapist
- **Multidisciplinary Team conference**
 - Australian diagnostic criteria for FASD fulfilled?
 - Other conditions?
 - Written report on strengths, difficulties, diagnoses, recommendations, referrals



Feedback of assessment results

Member of clinical team provides feedback to:

Parent/Guardian

- Full assessment results, diagnoses, recommendations and referral – in person (face-to-face, phone)
- Written report
- Support and follow-up provided

Banksia Hill Staff

- High level staff - full assessment results
- Ground staff (i.e. Youth Custodial Officers and Liaison Officers, teachers) -strengths, difficulties and recommendations.

Young person

- Strengths and difficulties – face-to-face.

A diagnosis is only provided to the young person if the clinical team, parent/guardian and Banksia Hill staff believe that the perceived benefit outweighs potential harms



Where are we up to?

- Pilot completed
- 29 young people assessed
- New challenges each day!

