

# BANKSIA HILL PROJECT FACT SHEET

## KEY FINDINGS

- The **Banksia Hill Project** is the first study in Australia to assess and diagnose young people in a youth custodial setting for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- FASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder caused when an unborn child is exposed to alcohol in the womb
- The Telethon Kids Institute assessment team was made up of health professionals including a paediatrician, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, and a neuropsychology team
- They worked with more than 100 young people aged 10-17 years who were sentenced to various periods of time at Banksia Hill Detention Centre during 2015 and 2016
- 99 young people completed full assessments
- Domains assessed were: brain structure/ neurology, cognition, attention, executive functioning, motor, language, memory, adaptive skills and social communication, and academic skills.
- 89% had at least one of these domains meeting the level of severe impairment  
65% had at least three domains severely impaired
- Only 11 of the young people who completed full assessments had no domains of severe neurodevelopmental impairment
- 36 young people in the study (36%) were identified as having FASD – the highest known prevalence of FASD in a custodial/corrective setting worldwide – with several more suspected but unable to be confirmed
- Of those 36, only two had been previously diagnosed
- Of those given a diagnosis of FASD, severe impairments were identified across the following domains: academic (86% of young people with FASD), attention (72%), executive function (78%), language (69%), memory (56%), motor skills (50%), and cognition (36%)
- Of those without a FASD diagnosis, severe impairments were identified across the same domains but at lower levels: academic (48% of those not diagnosed with FASD), attention (44%), executive function (40%), language (32%), memory (29%), motor skills (17%), and cognition (13%)
- 24 young people were assessed to have an IQ score less than or equal to 70 – 15 with FASD and 9 without FASD.

## About FASD

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** is characterised by severe neurodevelopmental impairment resulting from an unborn child's exposure to alcohol during pregnancy. The effects of prenatal alcohol exposure are life-long and may not be seen at birth. Problems include brain damage leading to delayed development, social, behavioural and learning problems. These can lead to secondary outcomes such as poor school performance, unemployment, substance abuse, mental health problems and early engagement with the justice system. FASD affects communities worldwide and is a leading cause of preventable non-genetic intellectual disability in Australia.