

# **The critical role of Aboriginal healing-informed, strengths-based and solution-focused approaches to address inequities around Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Australia**

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The legacies of colonisation have laid the foundations for cycles of inequity that are often cultivated and even perpetuated by many Australian systems that have remained largely unchanged throughout the last 235 years. Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing offer a pathway to heal the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual scars imposed by colonisation. One of the most insidious scars is the extensive, complex and compounding effects of historical and contemporary trauma from which Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) was borne. FASD silently percolates beneath our stories of child protection, deaths in custody, domestic violence, crime, poor social and emotional wellbeing, substance use, chronic disease, suicide and homelessness. Creating access to healing-informed, strengths-based and culturally responsive FASD knowledge, assessments, diagnosis and supports is key to addressing cycles of inequity in a holistic and sustainable way. The Australian FASD Indigenous Framework brings together Aboriginal and Western wisdom to unfold the changes that non-Aboriginal health professionals and Aboriginal communities each need to make in their respective ways of knowing, being and doing in order to facilitate equitable access to FASD resources. To our knowledge, this is the first FASD Indigenous Framework in the world and it embodies our ability to walk alongside each other and have genuine two-way knowledge sharing, where we see both Aboriginal Wisdom and Western Wisdom come together in a balanced way to complement and strengthen each other. Such solidarity is necessary to create new pathways, policies, practices and programs that can offer immense benefits to all Australians impacted by alcohol harms. This presentation offers learnings that will resonate with many cultural groups and provides insights that translate beyond the FASD sector where there is a need for healing, hope, equity and justice.