

30 June 2023

National Children's Commission Submission: Youth Justice and Child Protection

Dear Commissioner Hollonds,

Please find a submission from Dr Sharynne Hamilton and Dr Raewyn Mutch who were part of a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) prevalence study team, who spent an extensive amount of time onsite at Banksia Hill Detention Centre, Perth, Western Australia between 2015 and 2018 (WA).

Dr Hamilton [REDACTED] is a Ngunnawal woman whose traditional country is Canberra and Yass. Dr Hamilton has an extensive background in practice and research involving Aboriginal children and families negotiating statutory systems. Dr Hamilton was the qualitative researcher on the Banksia Hill study who spoke with detained children, their families, community and professional connections and non-custodial rehabilitation staff at Banksia Hill Detention Centre, Perth, Western Australia.

Thesis: [10.26182/kt9z-tg36](https://doi.org/10.26182/kt9z-tg36)

Abstract: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and associated neurodevelopmental impairments have major implications for justice-involved youth, the effects of which are not recognised or well understood. This study explores the experiences of multiple stakeholders in Western Australia who participated in a FASD prevalence study. Due to high numbers of Aboriginal participants, the use of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies were prioritised. The thesis explores the experiences and understandings of assessments for youth, their caregivers and their professional supports, and finds that there is a critical need to consider routine assessment models for justice-involved youth that are culturally and neurodevelopmentally responsive to need.

Peer reviewed work: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3057-8992>

Dr Mutch [REDACTED] is a Kāi Tahu woman and a specialist paediatrician with qualifications in 3 disciplines: (i) General Paediatrics, (ii) Child and Community Paediatrics, and (iii) Respiratory Paediatrics. Dr Mutch has completed a progressive body of research in collaboration and co-design with First Nations and Diverse communities across the domains of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), Juvenile Justice (JJ) and Refugee Health, informing state, national and international best practice and policy for health and justice. Dr Mutch was a Chief Investigator on the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funded study into the feasibility for screening and diagnosing FASD among sentenced children and young people in the Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre of Western Australia and is now an Investigator on the Aotearoa New Zealand Health Research Council study on the prevalence of Rangatahi with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in the Aotearoa New Zealand youth justice system. Dr Mutch maintains 0.6 FTE in a tertiary paediatric health service at Perth Children's Hospital, WA. Dr Mutch is a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Western Australia, Curtin University, WA and Harvard Program for Refugee Trauma, Continuing Medical Education, Harvard Medical School.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6654-8237> including co-authoring the book Decolonising Justice for Aboriginal youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

Collectively, we offer a narrative based on decades of knowledge, observation and experience gained from working with Aboriginal children and families in the health, child protection and justice systems.

Thank you for the opportunity and we hope it offers contribution to exploring ways forward.

Sharynne and Raewyn