



Project helps mums-to-be



A PROJECT developed and led by Aboriginal women in the Kimberley region's Fitzroy Valley is helping to

diagnose and prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in their community and providing support for parents and carers of affected children.

The Lililwan Project is a research partnership between the Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, the George Institute for Global Health and the University of Sydney's School of Medicine to conduct the unique study of FASD prevalence.

Alcohol use in pregnancy is widespread in Australia, according to chief investigator Elizabeth Elliott, Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Sydney, but is particularly prevalent in remote communities.

"This can have detrimental effects on the developing child, resulting in birth defects, learning and behavioural problems," Prof Elliott said.

The Lililwan Project began three years ago in the Kimberley to identify the prevalence of FASD, health needs and developmental problems of primary school-aged children.

The Indigenous female leaders in the Fitzroy Valley have formed partnerships with a diverse range of experts including researchers, paediatricians, allied health professionals, human rights advocates, counsellors, psychologists, teachers, youth justice and child protection teams.

Awareness

A short film, *Marulu*, was made to raise awareness of FASD and the impact on the lives of children, their families, carers and communities.

Tristan's Story, a documentary that follows the life of a child with FASD, is due for release in early 2012. An educational film aimed at professionals will also be produced. Funding for these films has been provided by a philanthropist, the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation

Foundation and Blake Dawson solicitors.

Stage one of the project was funded by a philanthropist and included the development and use of a medical history checklist to obtain information from parents and carers of all children born in 2002 or 2003 about pre-natal exposures, including alcohol and other drugs; early life trauma; health and development.

The second stage will involve a multi-disciplinary assessment of the health and development of the children surveyed in stage one and a study of child health service needs and gaps in the Fitzroy Valley. It is being funded by a National Health and Medical Research Council grant.

The Lililwan project has received funding from government and other agencies including the Federal Departments of Health and Ageing and of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Save the Children. Fee support has been provided by Blake Dawson Solicitors and M&CSaatchi.