

Alcohol damages new generation of babies

by UPI

HALLS CREEK, Australia -- Doctors say alcoholism is so prevalent in parts of Australia's Kimberley region that teens with fetal alcohol syndrome have babies with the same problems.

Girls as young as 13 and 14 whose mothers were alcoholics have become alcoholics themselves and now are giving birth to babies with defects and brain damage, said Dr. David Shepherd, senior doctor at Halls Creek Hospital.

Anecdotal evidence from doctors suggests that nearly 30 percent of babies born in Halls Creek have been affected by alcohol in the womb, The Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported Monday.

Residents of the region are divided on whether tougher restrictions on alcohol, including prohibition, could help reduce the problem.

Aboriginal elder Doreen Green said she favors tougher restrictions while hotel and bar owner Martin Pierson-Jones argues alcohol ID cards are the better solution.

"People who have got problems can be refused service," he said. "There are better ways of going (about it) than purely prohibition."

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