

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agreed on a 20 year Program of Action (PoA). 179 countries, including Australia, agreed to the PoA.

Abortion

The PoA states explicitly what constitutes “reproductive health”. It also states that abortion is *not* a method of family planning, and that any laws or policies relating to abortion are a matter for the relevant legislative processes in each country.

***“In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning. All Governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion through expanded and improved family-planning services.*”**

***Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion. Women who have unwanted pregnancies should have ready access to reliable information and compassionate counselling.*”**

Any measures or changes related to abortion within the health system can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process. In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe. In all cases, women should have access to quality services for the management of complications arising from abortion. Post-abortion counselling, education and family-planning services should be offered promptly, which will also help to avoid repeat abortions.” (PoA paragraph 8.25)

“Governments should take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning, and in all cases provide for the humane treatment and counselling of women who have had recourse to abortion.” (PoA paragraph 7.24)

Prevention of abortion

Countries are urged to reduce the number of abortions. The PoA says that the ***“prevention of abortion and the management of the consequences of abortion”*** (PoA paragraph 7.6)- through education and quality family planning services - is a key component of reproductive health services.