

Bulletin 26 - Summer 2008/09

ARHA's e-newsletter updates you on ARHA news and activities. We also offer a selection of general news about population and development and sexual and reproductive health issues.

Update on AusAID Family Planning Guidelines

It remains disappointing that the AusAID Family Planning Guidelines are still in place despite continued calls for their removal. The Guidelines prohibit any Australian aid money being used to fund programs that provide information or services related to safe abortion, even in countries where it is legal. The Guidelines were developed in 1996 when the Liberal Government of the day needed the support of independent Senator Brian Harradine to achieve partial privatization of the national telecommunications network.

ARHA has continued to advocate with energy and passion for the removal of the Guidelines. ARHA's CEO, Jane Singleton, has featured in the media and we continue to maintain contact with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith MP, on the issue.

There is much anticipation that the United States President-Elect Barack Obama will move to reverse the Global Gag Rule (officially termed the Mexico City Policy) early into his Presidency. The Australian Guidelines mimic the Global Gag Rule which mandates that "no US family planning assistance can be provided to foreign NGOs that use funding from any other source to: perform abortions in cases other than a threat to the

SPRINT Update

The SPRINT Initiative (Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations in East, Southeast Asia and the Pacific) is funded by AusAID and administered by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in partnership with ARHA, UNFPA and the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

SPRINT has \$3 million in funding over three years for a variety of measures including the Minimal Initial Service Package (MISP) for rapid deployment of trained humanitarian workers to

woman's life, rape or incest; provide counseling and referral for abortion; or lobby to make abortion legal or more available in their country". For more information on the Global Gag [click here](#)

Media coverage on the Guidelines

ARHA's CEO Jane Singleton on [ABC NEWS](#) and [RADIO NATIONAL](#)

Opportunities for ARHA in 2009

ARHA has received funding from UNFPA for a project entitled ***Building Parliamentary Groups on Population and Development in partnership with national parliamentarians and sectoral leaders***. The project will take place in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

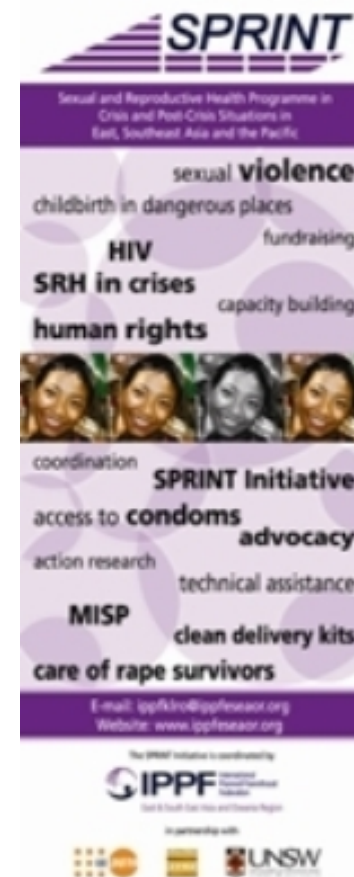
The key objective is to assist parliamentarians and stakeholders to establish Parliamentary Groups on sexual and reproductive health and population and development in their respective countries.

Work on this exciting project will commence in January and updates will appear in future e-newsletters.

PGPD Update



promote sexual and reproductive health after natural disasters or conflicts. It also promotes sexual and reproductive health in development.



Since the launch of SPRINT in February 2008 ARHA has continued to play an important advocacy and coordination role for the SPRINT Initiative. ARHA staff liaised and coordinated with our fellow SPRINT partners to identify key organisations and training staff for the MISP trainings held in Kuala Lumpur, Sydney and Suva throughout 2008. ARHA arranged for Australian Senator Kerry Nettle to speak to participants on the opening day of the Kuala Lumpur training.

At the Sydney training, ARHA hosted an informal event to provide an opportunity for interested NSW parliamentarians to meet the SPRINT Initiative trainers and participants from a number of humanitarian agencies based in Australia and the Pacific region.

The next phase of the SPRINT Initiative will focus on rolling out echo trainer trainings in countries across the South East Asia and Pacific Region.

The Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD) currently has 100 members - 41 Federal Members and 59 State/Territory Members. The Group has contributed to raising awareness in Australian parliaments about international population and development issues and has continued to grow in size, experience and activities throughout 2008.

PGPD members attended a number of international meetings in the second half of 2008. The Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC from the NSW Parliament attended the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) Standing Committee on Women meeting in Wellington, New Zealand.

In December, the Chair of the PGPD, Senator Claire Moore, attended the AFPPD General Assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam where she was elected Chair of the Standing Committee on Women.



The Hon. Steve Chadwick MP, New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development, and Senator Claire Moore in Hanoi

ARHA is secretariat to the PGPD. For more information on the PGPD visit their [website](#).

National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy



Participants at the Sydney training

For more information on SPRINT [click here](#).

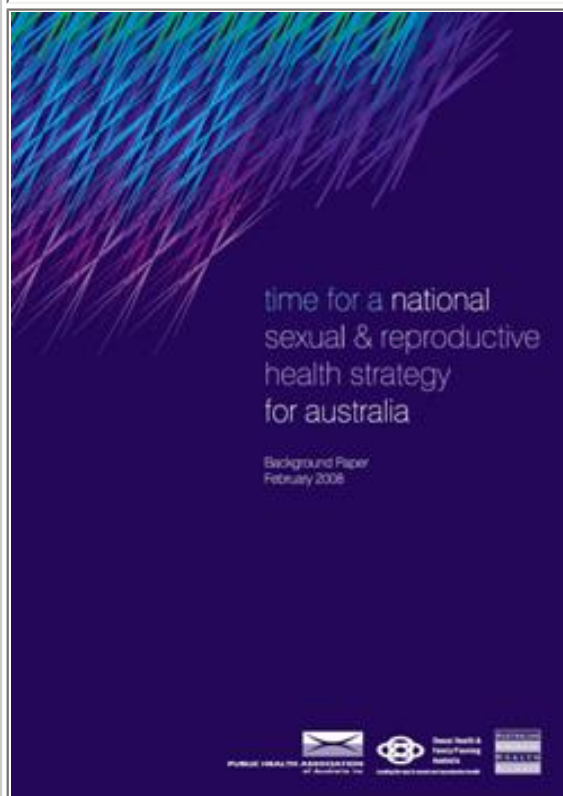
Launch of UNFPA State of World Population Report

Every year ARHA hosts the Australian launch of the UNFPA State of World Population Report. The theme of the 2008 report was *Reaching Common Ground: Culture, Gender and Human Rights*. ARHA, in conjunction with the PGPD hosted the launch at Parliament House, Canberra in November.



The PGPD hosted the launch of the Framework for a *National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy for Australia* in mid-2008.

The Framework calls for a for a comprehensive and evidence-based national sexual and reproductive health strategy to improve the health of all in our community, both women and men. It is supported by ARHA, the Public Health Association of Australia and Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia.



To read the background paper [click here](#).

Senator Claire Moore, Chair of the PGPD presided over the event which included three speakers - the Hon. Bob McMullan MP, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance and a member of the PGPD, Mr Ian Howie, UNFPA Representative in Vietnam and Dr Iwu Utomo from the Australian National University.



Ian Howie, Dr Iwu Utomo, Hon. Bob McMullan MP

Mr McMullan welcomed the report as a great statistical source and stated that “by being culturally sensitive it doesn’t meant we should accept the unacceptable... when we speak of universal rights we need to recall that the word universal means just that, universal”. Mr McMullan also spoke about the importance of realising the Millennium Development Goals in the Asia Pacific region and stated that “UNFPA is an important ally in our shared campaign”.

Mr Howie commended the report to the audience stating that “the issues and challenges we work on are global; culture, gender and human rights are issues that transcend borders and are important in every city and country of the world from Hanoi to Hobart”. Mr Howie used a number of examples including Female Genital Cutting, people trafficking, and the Hmong people in Vietnam to highlight aspects of the relationship between culture, gender and human rights.

Dr Utomo spoke about the Indonesian experience of developing culturally sensitive approaches to development by highlighting both progress and barriers in the field of culture, gender and human rights.

Attendees at the launch included parliamentarians,

Submission to Senate Committee

ARHA made a submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee *Inquiry into item 16525 in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations 2007*. The Inquiry was a result of Senator Guy Barnett's (Liberal, Tasmania) motion to disallow Medicare funding for second trimester and late-term abortion. The Committee received 529 submissions.

ARHA board director, Kelsey Powell, presented our submission to the Committee. The Committee issued their report in November 2008. It makes no definitive recommendation to either maintain or disallow the item number. For more information and to read the final report in full visit the Committee's [website](#)

Changes in Board membership

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2008, Jean Shannon was unanimously elected as the new ARHA President. ARHA would like to congratulate Jean and extend our heartfelt thanks to Heather Macdonald who served as President for three years. Heather will continue to serve on ARHA's board. ARHA also extends its thanks to retiring members Jane Hearn and Jim Redden and welcomes Margaret Hansford as a new committee member.

Jean Shannon has a Masters of Business Administration in change management, is a practitioner in mediation and conciliation and is accredited by the St James Centre for Ethics. She has in depth experience in corporate and public communication, marketing, and governance. Ms Shannon is currently Managing Director of Jean Shannon and Associates and is a casual lecturer for the ANU Legal Workshop and the ANU Crawford School of Government & Economics, formerly the Asia Pacific School of Economics & Government. She has contributed to a wide range of professional publications, journals and media productions. She has been an ARHA Committee Member since 2007 and is committed to ARHA's mission and work.

At the AGM members heard from life member Marie Coleman who presented an overview on the impact of the current Australian Government and future US Government policies on sexual and reproductive health.

academics and representatives of development organisations, amongst others.



Senator Louise Pratt, Maggie Kenyon, Dr Susie Close, Senator Claire Moore

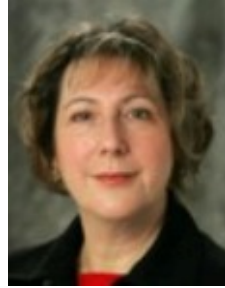
For more information on the Report [click here](#)

Pacific Launch of new Handbook for Parliamentarians "Taking Action Against HIV"

The Hon. Francesca Semoso, Deputy Speaker of the Bougainville Legislative Assembly and the Hon. John Tangi, Leader of the House from the Parliament of Cook Islands launched a major new publication *Taking Action Against HIV: A Handbook for Parliamentarians* at the 2008 Conference of the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly on Population and Development (PPAPD) in Solomon Islands in November.

ARHA Board 2009

President: Jean Shannon



Vice President: Dr Meredith Burgmann



Vice President: Kelsey Powell



Hon. John Tangi, Cook Islands and Hon. Francesca Semoso, Bougainville

The new Handbook aims to provide parliamentarians with the information they need in order to initiate and provide a rights-based HIV response to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for all.

"As parliamentarians, we have the authority to call for change – we can talk about issues that matter – we can lead by example. Responding to HIV requires commitment, boldness and pragmatism. It also requires courage because it forces us to deal with sensitive issues, particularly for us in the Pacific. It forces us to look at the status of women, at the status of our youth, at the status of people who have different sexualities, at drug use, at human trafficking, at child abuse and sex work," Ms Semoso said.

HIV and AIDS has been reported in almost all Pacific countries and its impacts are increasingly visible. Between 2006 and 2008, the number of new infections doubled – from 7,000 cases a year to 14,000. HIV/AIDS can reverse hard won development gains, destroy human capital, reduce life expectancy and greatly damage the social fabric of Pacific communities.

"As elected leaders, we parliamentarians have both the mandate and the public trust to debate these sensitive issues. We need to look at the role that culture and tradition can play in making us either more resilient or more susceptible to this reckless virus," Ms Semoso acknowledged.

Secretary: Beverley Aitkin



Treasurer: Allison Diacono



Committee members:

Margaret Hansford

Heather Macdonald



John Gerofi



The Handbook is the result of a long standing collaboration between three international organizations – the Inter-Parliamentary Union, UNAIDS and UNDP.

Garry Wiseman, the Manager of the UNDP Pacific Centre, said he hoped the publication would be an important tool for legislators in the region.

“The Handbook recognises the importance of leadership and specifically acknowledges the contribution made by the PPAPD meeting in Fiji which produced the 2004 Suva Declaration on HIV/AIDS,” said Mr. Wiseman.

Earlier in proceedings, the Conference endorsed Ms Semoso and Mr Tangi as “PPAPD-FPOC Champions” for HIV/AIDS advocacy work in the Pacific region and internationally. Mr Tangi was formerly a Youth Development Officer at the Secretariat for the Pacific Community, working across the countries of the region.

“It is very encouraging that the choice of the champions – representing both the Eastern and Western Pacific – embraces all Pacific Islands nations. I believe that a champion should be seen in the context of a “servant” – a servant to this cause and to the people. I would like to use this position to call for the co-operation of all sectors of society, in particular, in my own role as a Pastor, recognizing the importance of the churches. This Handbook, and the Report of the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation which was also launched today, will be very important resources which will assist the work of legislators and policy makers in the Pacific,” said Mr Tangi.

The final Outcomes Statement from the 2008 PPAPD Conference specifically recognized the important role of Pacific legislators in dealing with HIV and AIDS. Members of PPAPD encouraged Governments and legislatures to act to protect the rights of people living with HIV and AIDS, including by enacting and/or amending relevant legislation.

In looking to the future, the meeting recognized that Presiding Officers and legislators themselves should act as national champions in tackling HIV and AIDS and show leadership to their communities, including by encouraging voluntary HIV and AIDS testing.

Farewell -

ARHA's Policy and Program Manager Julie Wiltshire left ARHA in December to return to Uganda, where she had previously lived for 10 years. Julie is returning to work for Straight Talk Foundation, an NGO that provides adolescent sexual and reproductive health information through radio programs, newspapers, school groups and in Internally Displaced Persons camps. We wish Julie all the best!



ARHA's administration assistant Danielle Ingle is leaving to embark on her Honours year at the Australian National University. Danielle's area of study will be in bacteria and genetics. Good luck Danielle!

**New faces -**

Greig Collins is ARHA's Financial Manager. Greig has had a long career in the banking and accounting sector having worked for Westpac Bank for eight years in Papua New Guinea and as Business Manager for the Australian Council of International Development.



Jane Outteridge completed an internship with ARHA in the second half of 2008. Jane is studying for a Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (Gender) at the Australian National University. Her main task was to prepare ARHA's submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee Inquiry. Jane is now working part-time for ARHA as a Project Assistant.



Source: PPAPD. For more information visit their [website](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS CLIPS

Note: these headlines are an information resource and reflect a diversity of news and views, not necessarily ARHA's

[AFGHANISTAN: HIV-positive patients to get ARV therapy for first time](#) - IRIN News, 7 January 2009

KABUL, 7 January 2009 (IRIN) - Forty of the 504 people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in Afghanistan will be provided with standard antiretroviral therapy for the first time, as efforts are made to boost control of the killer disease, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has said.

[UPDATE 2-US FDA advisers back new female condom](#) - Reuters, 11 December 2008

A potentially less-costly version of Female Health Co's condom for women won unanimous backing from a U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisory panel on Thursday. A lower price could attract more users and allow health organizations to distribute more of the condoms to help stem the spread of the virus that causes AIDS, the panel heard.

[Dr. Allan Rosenfield, Women's Health Advocate, Dies at 75](#) - The New York Times, 16 October 2008

Dr. Rosenfield, who learned he had A.L.S. in 2005, also had another progressive disease, myasthenia gravis, but he continued to work until his retirement in June 2008, after 22 years as dean of the school. He worked for more than four decades on women's reproductive health and human rights, innovative family planning studies and strategies to address maternal deaths because of AIDS in developing countries. Perhaps his most notable effort was the Mother-to-Child Transmission program, which has so far brought comprehensive health care to more than 500,000 women and infants.

[Why are mothers still dying in childbirth?](#) - The Guardian, 28 September 2008

ARHA Staff list

CEO - Jane Singleton AM

Parliamentary and Communications Officer - Alice Ruxton

Financial Manager (part-time) - Greig Collins

Project Assistant (part-time) - Jane Outteridge



Danielle, Jane O, Alice

Thank you to all the volunteers who have assisted us in many different ways large and small throughout 2008!!!!



Chris and Geoff doing muscle work!

It is one of the world's greatest hidden epidemics, but the search for a solution is hopelessly underfunded. On average, every minute of every day a woman somewhere dies in childbirth or pregnancy, the overwhelming majority in developing countries. It is estimated that they number more than half a million every year, in what Norway's Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg, told the United Nations last week was 'the biggest expression of brutality to women I can imagine'.

[>>>More International News](#)

AUSTRALIAN NEWS CLIPS

[Aussies 'hit and miss' with safe sex](#) - 13 January 2009, Melbourne Herald Sun_

SEX never goes out of fashion but Australians, it seems, are less engaged when it comes to contraception or the tricky topic of related infections. Half of those who say condoms were their primary form of contraception admit to not using them every time they had sex, according to a study.

[Chlamydia cases double in Qld over last five years](#) – ABC News, 9 October 2008

Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) says there has been an alarming increase in the number of sexually transmitted diseases reported across the state. New health data shows the number of reported cases chlamydia has doubled in the last five years.

[Senator Guy Barnett's abortion motion on Medicare funding fails](#) - The Courier Mail, 12 September 2008_

A CONTROVERSIAL motion to strip Medicare funding for 'late-term' abortions has failed days before a conscience vote was to be taken in the Senate. Tasmanian Senator Guy Barnett will likely withdraw his disallowance motion in the Upper House on Wednesday, the same day 75 other senators would have been forced to reveal which way they would vote on the issue.

[>>>more domestic news](#)

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On the other hand, we would appreciate your help in reaching more readers. **Please advise us** if there is someone you know who would like to receive this e-newsletter or please forward it on.

SUPPORT ARHA



Our health, our lives, our planet, our future

Since ARHA's creation in 1995, we have been entirely funded by international grant-making agencies. However, the time has come for ARHA to seek public support from within Australia and internationally.

There are several ways you can support ARHA in its work to protect and promote reproductive health.

Become an ARHA member

By becoming a member of ARHA you will be demonstrating your support for the work that we do and your commitment to reproductive health. As an ARHA member you will receive:

- regular e-bulletins
- priority invitations to our seminars and events
- mail outs on the latest information on reproductive health and population issues
- an annual advance copy of the UNFPA's State of the World Population Report
- our annual report

You can [Join online](#) or phone us for a membership application form on 02 6249 6566.

[Donate](#)

If you would like to donate to ARHA, it is now easier than ever, simply visit our online [donation page](#) or call us on 02 6249 6566.

Volunteer

ARHA volunteers offer support in many different ways:

- We can always use office/administration support!
- We also from time to time need volunteers to assist with planning and coordination of fundraising and public relations activities
- We have pro bono legal support and would be grateful for any other professional support that members can offer for example, website design

If you are interested in volunteering your services to ARHA then please call Alice Ruxton 02 6249 6566.

The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA)

www.arha.org.au

Our mission is to promote public support for enhanced reproductive and sexual health in Australia and internationally, and promote the advancement of the status of women and girls.



ACFID member and code of conduct signatory

UN ECOSOC Status

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