



Media release

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Harradine legacy must go – MPs

Following hearings held in August and September last year, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD), today issued a report recommending abolition of the AusAID family planning guidelines.

The PGPD Chair, Dr Mal Washer, launched the report, *Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals in the Australian Aid Program — the Way Forward*, at Parliament House.

Dr Washer strongly supported the report's central recommendation that Australia's international aid agency should follow the accepted family planning protocols of most other nations, rather than having to observe a special set of guidelines.

The guidelines, a legacy of former Senator Brian Harradine, effectively ban the use of aid funds for some types of contraceptives, and for information and services about abortion.

The report said the guidelines were "cruel and illogical" and had the effect of encouraging unsafe (illegal) abortions, which are responsible for 13 per cent of all maternal deaths globally, many in our region.

Dr Washer said that as a supporter of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Australia had committed to improving maternal health (MDG 5).

"Far from helping to achieve this goal, the Harradine guidelines actually increase the likelihood that more women will die," Dr Washer said.

The PGPD report said the guidelines also contravened Australia's commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994, which stated that "in circumstances where abortion is not against the law, health systems should train and equip health service providers and should take other measures to ensure that abortion is safe and accessible", as it is in Australia.

Dr Washer said the reproductive health guidelines of the World Health Organization were good enough for the vast majority of donor nations, and there was no reason why Australia needed extra restrictions.

The report also recommended that family planning, contraception and sexual and reproductive health services be integrated with HIV/AIDS programs, and that the proportion of Australia's overseas aid budget devoted to sexual and reproductive health be increased to at least 10 per cent.

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NOTE FOR MEDIA: the report will be launched at **4pm on Wednesday 30 May in Committee Room 1R6 of the House of Representatives**. All media representatives are welcome to attend. Embargoed copies can be made available beforehand.