



# Media Alert

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## MPs to discuss aid and sexual health

Australian Members of Parliament will meet on Monday, 14 August, for the inaugural Parliamentary Roundtable on sexual and reproductive health in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Roundtable Discussions, *Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals in the Australian Aid Program - the way forward*, will be held in Room 2S3 of Parliament House and will be open to the public. The opening statement will be given at 8.30 am by Dr Sharman Stone, Chair of the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD).

Dr Stone said the inauguration of the Roundtable indicated a growing interest by MPs of all parties in the issues raised by the UN's International Conference on Population (ICPD, 1994) and in the goals set at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit.

"A group of interested MPs have been meeting since 1992, and in recent years membership and attendances have grown steadily," Dr Stone said. "There is a greater realisation of the importance of sexual and reproductive health to the achievement of prosperity and stability in developing nations, and a growing demand for more information and discussion on the subject."

Australia is a signatory to the 20-year ICPD Programme of Action, which recognises women's right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and safe and effective contraception based on informed choice. Australia's commitment to this Programme was confirmed in the White Paper on the Australian government's overseas aid program released in April, and in AusAID's Policy for Australian Development Assistance in Health released on 8 August.

Dr Sharon Camp, the head of a US research institute that provides global statistics and advocacy on sexual and reproductive health, is visiting Australia specifically to attend the Roundtable, and will be its first speaker. Dr Camp, Chief Executive Officer of the New York and Washington-based Guttmacher Institute, will give a presentation on *The Return on Investment in Sexual and Reproductive Health*.

Presentations will follow on:

- *Sexual and Reproductive Health in Crises and in Fragile States* (Julie Mundy, Marie Stopes International);
- *Value Adding in Sexual and Reproductive Health in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Dr Anna Whelan, University of NSW);
- *Sexual and Reproductive Rights in the Australian Aid Program: Absence and Opportunity* (Dr Elizabeth Bennett, Key Centre for Women's Health in Society);
- *Female controlled HIV Prevention in the Region* (Bridget Haire, Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations); and
- *Maternal and Child Health Programs in the Asia Pacific Region* (Karen Hill, Save the Children Australia).

A second Parliamentary Roundtable on this subject is scheduled for 11 September.

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