

“This will save lives”

Australian Reproductive Health Alliance welcomes changes to AusAID Family Planning Guidelines

The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) believes the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Stephen Smith MP's changes to the AusAID Family Planning Guidelines have the potential to save thousands of women's lives in childbirth and related complications.

ARHA CEO Jane Singleton says, “Thousands of women and their families in our region will now be able to plan the numbers and spacing of their children should they wish to.”

Minister Smith's decision accords the same human rights women in our own country have to those to whom we give support in the form of aid and development funding.

“This is a humane and enlightened change,” says Ms Singleton.

“His promise of up to \$15 million to go towards maternal and child health in Australia's aid program is proof of his goodwill. “

Ms Singleton was speaking from Papua New Guinea where she is meeting with Parliamentarians over the issue of maternal death and sexual and reproductive health. Last year in PNG the maternal death rate doubled according to UN figures.

“Parliamentarians in this country will welcome the decision and understand how the 11 years of the Guidelines put into policy at the behest of former Senator Harradine have affected family planning in their country and the region,” said Ms Singleton.

AusAID funding during this period for family planning diminished by more than 84%.

“This has been an appalling policy with many tragic outcomes”, Ms Singleton said.

“Minister Smith is to be most heartily congratulated”.

Under AusAID's Guidelines no information about unsafe abortion could be given and no service provided even in countries where abortion is legal.

Information interviews - Jane Singleton (CEO) +61411 013 269, Alice Ruxton +61401 648 886

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