

**Australian Reproductive Health Alliance welcomes  
Minister Smith's imminent decision**

***"No more horse-trading over the lives of women"***

The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) welcomes the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith MP's announcement that a decision on the future of the AusAID Family Planning Guidelines is close.

At the weekend, as one of his first actions, US President Barack Obama signed an executive order to remove the Global Gag, which the Guidelines mirror. The Guidelines may be similarly struck out as they are embedded in AusAID policy, not in legislation or regulation.

Under AusAID's Guidelines no information about unsafe abortion can be given and no service provided even in countries where abortion is legal. Funding for family planning has decreased from \$6.8 million in 1995/6 to \$2.28 million in 2006/7 since their introduction. Family planning funding in the Australian aid budget has decreased by 84% from 1995 to 2007 (0.44% to 0.07% of total aid).

ARHA CEO Jane Singleton says, "Horse-trading and political deals in the Senate over an issue which contributes to the death of thousands of women in our region is simply not acceptable."

"A woman dies every minute in the world from pregnancy or related complications – a woman a minute. We cannot let this continue."

Australia is now the only country in the world to limit overseas aid funds in this way. The Guidelines are in conflict with Australia's commitment to the World Health Organisation protocols and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action.

**Information interviews - Jane Singleton (CEO) 0411 013 269, Alice Ruxton 0401 648 886**