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Leading Reproductive Health Agency Urges Australian Government to Remember its Promises to Women

The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) calls on the Australian Government — this International Women’s Day — to honour its international commitments made to women in 2004 and 2005.

In October 2004 John Howard reaffirmed Australia’s 1994 commitment to advancing the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agreeing that Australia would do its ‘utmost to remove all remaining barriers ... that inhibit access to family planning services, information and education, as well as to help support the provision of reproductive health and family planning services as widely as possible.’

Christina Richards, CEO of ARHA, said “The government’s \$51 million emphasis on pregnancy counselling as a way to reduce abortion in Australia is out of step with previous ICPD commitments to reduce recourse to abortion through expanded family planning services. Counselling after the event is hardly a preventative measure.

“In 2005 the Australian government strengthened its commitment to women’s health and rights by signing the UN World Summit Outcome Document which agreed amongst other things to ensure equal access to reproductive health by 2015.

“This is an important commitment for women in our region where poor reproductive health remains a leading cause of death and disability.

“East Timor and Papua New Guinea have some of the highest death and disability rates in the world from complications of pregnancy and very little is being done to assist them.

“We hope that the new White Paper for Australia’s Aid Program will provide increased funding to stop these women from dying in entirely preventable situations” Ms Richards added.

For interviews contact Christina Richards, CEO of ARHA, on 0427884479