

### 1. What is FARREP?

The Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP) was established by the Department of Human Services in 1998 as a primary health response to increasing populations from countries which practise Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) settling in Australia.

The Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP) was established in Victoria in 1995 in response to the United Nations (UN) convention on the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Australia's obligation to work towards the elimination of FGM. Several community and health organisations have since been involved in a service network to promote the prevention and eradication of FGM among affected communities.

The aims of FARREP are to work with communities which practise FGM to:

- strengthen their knowledge about FGM and support a change in attitude to prevent its occurrence
- increase access to timely and appropriate sexual and reproductive health services by women and girls from communities which may practise FGM
- build the capacity and expertise of mainstream and specialist sexual and reproductive health services to support women and girls affected by or at risk of being affected by FGM.

### 2. What is the role of Family Planning Victoria (FPV)?

In July 2009, the Department of Health appointed FPV to undertake the role of state-wide FARREP facilitation with the aim of developing a Victorian Integrated Health Promotion plan (2010-12) to achieve the above aims.

The purpose of the FARREP Facilitator's role is to develop, implement and evaluate the Victorian FARREP Integrated Health Promotion plan. This plan aims to identify and reduce any gaps in service provision, provide a coordinated approach to program delivery and report and promote the efficient and effective use of resources.

### 3. How did International Day Against FGM come about?

On 6 February 2003, the First Lady of Nigeria, Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, made the official declaration on 'Zero Tolerance to FGM' in Africa during a conference organised by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC), a non-governmental network headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

'6 February is International Day against Female Genital Mutilation. The day has been designated by the United Nations to raise awareness amongst the general public about this traditional practice which severely violates the human rights of women and girls. The practice is still widespread in spite of a global commitment following the 2002 UN Special Session on Children to end FGM by 2010.'<sup>1</sup>

### 4. Who are the affected populations globally and more specifically in Victoria?

With a focus on those most at risk, FARREP targets all communities which practise FGM, regardless of mode of arrival, period of settlement, race, religion or culture. Some communities known to practise FGM are newly arrived, while others have a long history of settlement in Victoria.

FGM is not confined to a particular religion, as perceived by some individuals and communities. The World Health Organization Interagency statement on eliminating Female Genital Mutilation (WHO 2008) identifies the following areas where FGM is prevalent (in varied degrees):

Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

### 5. Who are the stakeholders in Victoria?

Currently, Victoria has 11 FARREP service providers operating through hospitals community health centres and local councils.

For details of Victorian FARREP service providers, contact Claire Naffah.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unifemuk.org/news-international-day-against-female-genital-mutilation.php>



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## **6. What kind of activities does the FARREP service system run to raise awareness about FGM and prevention?**

The FARREP service system runs a diverse range of community activities, including information sessions at community and maternal/child health centres, youth-focused activities, festivals and events.

E.g. The Northern Region FARREP network successfully coordinated a health promotion day for African students from secondary schools in Melbourne's North/West. The day included information sessions about sexual and reproductive health delivered by FARREP workers, legal issues delivered by Victoria Police and a session on sexually transmissible infections facilitated by key multicultural health and support services. It also featured interactive workshops on hip hop, self defense, jewellery making and henna hand painting.

The FARREP service system also provides education to health professionals and professional development for allied health professionals and primary care partnerships.

E.g. Victorian FARREP workers visit health centres and provide training and information sessions about FGM and the cultural expectations and traditions of affected communities.

## **7. Is the practice legal in Victoria?**

The performance of FGM and/or the removal of a child from Victoria to have such procedures performed are specifically prohibited in Victoria under the *Crimes (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 1996*. Moreover, certain professional groups have a mandatory obligation to report concerns under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse, including FGM.

## **8. Who can be contacted for more information?**

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