

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

SEXUAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING AUSTRALIA POSITION STATEMENT

ABORTION:

Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia (SH&FPA) recognises that abortion engenders strong political, legal, medical, social, religious, moral and personal responses.

SH&FPA believes that abortion should be legal, safe and accessible to all women for the reasons of -

HEALTH: to safeguard women's health, and to reduce mortality and morbidity as a result of unsafe and illegal abortion.

CHOICE: to ensure that women have the information needed to exercise self-determination, sexual and reproductive freedom and sexual equality.

RIGHTS: to protect women's basic human rights and ensure that these rights are not legally impaired or compromised and that they have access to confidential counselling and services to regulate their fertility.

SH&FPA believes that -

- Safe legal abortion is an essential component of effective sexual and reproductive health services.
- Abortion services should be integrated into public health services. *It* is the responsibility of health service institutions to provide abortion within the terms of existing state legislation.
- The prevention of unintended pregnancy is of primary importance for women's health and safe contraceptive methods should be actively promoted to minimise the number of abortions in Australia.
- Abortion should be removed from the criminal codes of all Australian jurisdictions.
- The quality and confidentiality of abortion services must be guaranteed, and the rights of the client respected.
- Where a health care provider has a legitimate conscientious objection to abortion they must provide non-judgemental, non-coercive counselling and objective referral.
- Included in training of all medical, nursing and counselling staff should be opportunities to consider personal value systems and exploration of differing values.

SH&FPA will -

- Advocate for the decriminalisation of abortion and actively promote freedom of choice for women.

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

ABORTION (Cont'd)

- Advocate for the provision of safe affordable medical and surgical abortion methods and a range of choices through consultation and liaison with government, medical services and other agencies.
- Promote the dissemination of accurate information relating to abortion and other methods of fertility regulation.
- Support and promote the provision of the range of services related to unplanned pregnancy delivered by the family planning organizations.
- Advocate for the development and provision of appropriate and responsive training programs for service providers.
- Collaborate with other like-minded agencies in the field in fulfilling the above objectives.
- Support the IPPF statement on abortion which commits member organizations to work for the elimination of unsafe abortion and for increasing the right of access to safe legal abortion for all women.

Family Planning Victoria is a member of the National Federation, Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia (SH&FPA).

SH&FPA undertakes a range of activities relating to advocacy, lobbying, management of our international program and developing national position papers.

During this year, SH&FPA have reviewed two significant position statements, namely: ***Emergency Contraception; Abortion.***

As a member of SH&FPA, Family Planning Victoria has adopted these positions.

These position statements have been included in this annual report to prompt wide distribution with our communities.

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES . . .

SEXUAL HEALTH & FAMILY PLANNING AUSTRALIA POSITION STATEMENT

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION:

Emergency contraception is under-utilised in Australia and has the potential to significantly reduce the incidence of abortion. Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia (SH&FPA) supports universal access to emergency contraception, in recognition of the human right to free and informed choice regarding sexual health. SH&FPA recognises the urgency of the need for access to emergency contraception, particularly in communities where there are high rates of teenage pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy due to sexual violence; SH&FPA also recognises that trauma can be reduced by the prevention of pregnancy in victims of rape. SH&FPA supports the principle of equity of access whereby people in developing countries are entitled to the same reproductive health care as people in Australia.

SH&FPA supports the following recommendations of the World Health Organization, International Planned Parenthood Federation and Family Health International -

- ◆ prompt and easy access to emergency contraception is crucial to its effective use
- ◆ government and non government organizations should include emergency contraceptives in all Family Planning Programs and on all national essential drug lists

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (Cont'd)

- ◆ all women seeking contraception from health providers should be informed of emergency contraception
- ◆ drug regulatory authorities should require explicit descriptions of emergency use in the labeling of oral contraceptives and copper IUDs that can be used for emergency contraception

SH&FPA notes the approval by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, of the levonorgestrel method of emergency contraception for prescription by medical practitioners in Australia.

- ◆ SH&FPA recognizes the need for ongoing educational and promotional strategies to ensure greater public awareness and use of emergency contraception.
- ◆ SH&FPA recommends that the levonorgestrel emergency contraceptive be made available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.
- ◆ SH&FPA further recommends that, considering the efficacy and safety of the method, the levonorgestrel emergency contraceptive is made available to women from specifically trained pharmacists and nurses without a prescription. The medication should be supplied with dosage, expected and side effect information

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES. . . .

and advice regarding links to services for ongoing contraception and sexually transmitted infection screening.