

The Family Planning Alliance of Australia (FPAA) appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality. FPAA is the nation's peak body in sexual and reproductive health and rights, representing [member organisations](#) in all states and territories of Australia. We are the Australian member organisation for the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

FPAA regards sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRH&R) as critical to gender equality. Sexual and reproductive health and access to services impacts women, their participation in the workforce, education and the community.^{1,2}

Australia is a signatory to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which see sexual and reproductive health and rights as central to achieving progress in health and gender equity by 2030.

FPAA support the definition proposed by the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission³ (2018, p.2,646):

‘Sexual and reproductive health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity...’

All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to access services that support that right. Achievement of sexual and reproductive health relies on the realisation of sexual and reproductive rights, which are based on the human rights of all individuals...

Essential sexual and reproductive health services must meet public health and human rights standards, including the “Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Quality” framework of the right to health.’

The key elements of SRH&R identified by the WHO⁴ are:

- Contraception
- Infertility
- Antenatal care, childbirth, postnatal care
- Abortion
- STIs including HIV
- Reproductive cancers
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- Gender-based violence

¹ UNESCO Advancing gender equality and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/escap_appc_2018_3.pdf

² Women’s Health West (2016) The health inequities of sexual and reproductive health: A review of the literature. Available at: https://whwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SRH_-_literature_review_hires.pdf

³ Starrs A (2018) et al. Accelerate progress—sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher–Lancet Commission. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)30293-9.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(18)30293-9.pdf)

⁴ Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Infographic Snapshot Australia 2021. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/349213>

FPAA believe that Australia can accelerate gender equality by:

- including sexual and reproductive health and rights as a key element of the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality, and
- developing a National Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health with linked up, programmatic commissioning, governance, evaluation and monitoring
- investing in SRH health peaks and advisory groups with a rights focus.

In 2019 Bateman and Black⁵ highlighted the need to design a system that ensures strong linkages, cross-sector collaboration and innovative approaches to service delivery to capitalise on synergies.

Examples of key areas for action that could be progressed within a National Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health are:

- comprehensive sexuality education
- integrated sexual and reproductive health services
- workforce development.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)

Systematic reviews published in 2020⁶ and 2023⁷ confirmed comprehensive sexuality education (also known as relationships and sexual health education) simultaneously addresses gender and power, as well as sexual and reproductive health outcomes. There is a need for interventions to start at a young age, before gender norms and roles become ingrained, and continuing through childhood and adolescence, and reaching beyond the classroom, including targeting the broader school community.

CSE supports the prevention of:

- gendered violence
- unintended pregnancy
- bullying
- child sexual abuse
- STIs, HIV and other BBV

CSE empowers young people to:

- develop the knowledge and lifelong skills to enjoy respectful relationships
- make informed and safe decisions concerning relationships, reproduction, contraception, sexual health, and wellbeing
- understand where to go for support.

⁵ Bateson D and Black K (2019) The Guttmacher–Lancet Commission on sexual and reproductive health and rights: how does Australia measure up. Available at:

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2019/210/6/guttmacher-lancet-commission-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-how-does>

⁶ Goldfarb E and Lieberman L (2020) Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education. Available at: <https://www.jahonline.org/action/showPdf?pii=S1054-139X%2820%2930456-0>

⁷ Sell K et al (2023) Comprehensive Sex Education Addressing Gender and Power: A Systematic Review to Investigate Implementation and Mechanisms of Impact. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13178-021-00674-8>.

Integrated sexual and reproductive health services

FPAA's position is that increasing access through integrated models of sexual and reproductive health services, will be able to target those most in need including young people. Integrated models include services such as:

Specialised primary health care

- Contraception
- Counselling
- STI testing and treatment
- HIV prescribing (incl PEP and PreP)
- MpX, HBA, HBV, HPV vaccinations
- Termination of pregnancy
- Clean Needle Programs
- Gender and sexual diversity counselling
- Gender affirming medical care
- Clinical helplines, referrals and provider lists

Health promotion and prevention

- Parent and community education
- Public health campaigns, newsletters
- Community development and advocacy
- Outbreak communications.

Workforce development

Workforce development is a key component of service delivery.

Training topics include:

- Sexual and Reproductive Health Certificates
- Contraception
- IUD Insertion
- Implanon Insertion
- Cervical Screening
- STI's, HIV and BBV's
- Pregnancy Options Counselling
- LGBTIQ inclusion.

Workforces include:

- Doctors
- Nurses/Midwives
- Aboriginal Health Practitioners
- Allied Health Workers
- Youth and community workers
- Counsellors
- Disability workers