



Steve Fielding Family First Senator for Victoria



**Senator Steve Fielding
Leader of the FAMILY FIRST Party
FAMILY FIRST Senator for Victoria**

Adjournment Speech: Overseas Aid, Maternal Health

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FAMILY FIRST opposes the diverting of scarce foreign aid funds to abortions because the demands on Australia's foreign aid money are already so great.

It is also important that, as a nation, we question our priorities. Surely we should be doing everything possible to ensure that pregnancy is made safer for women in the Third World. That should be our priority. We should not be focusing on how we can pay for more abortions.

More than half a million women in the Third World die every single year because of complications in pregnancy and childbirth. That is one death every minute. For every woman who dies, a further 20 are seriously injured or disabled due to complications.

It is extremely difficult for us in Australia to comprehend the enormity of these statistics. For example, the risk of death during pregnancy or childbirth in parts of Africa is one in 16 compared to one in 2,800 women in the Western world.

Up to four in every 10 such deaths in Africa are due to severe bleeding. Many could be prevented by providing safe blood.

FAMILY FIRST fully supports Millennium Development Goal No. 5 on maternal health: to reduce by three-quarters the rate of death during pregnancy or during childbirth in the Third World.

Why should we divert scarce dollars in Australia's foreign aid money to abortions when we cannot even offer women in developing countries the opportunity to safely give birth?

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FAMILY FIRST wants there to be an increase in Australian foreign aid. We want more aid to be focused on tackling these practical issues as it would make an enormous difference to thousands of women and their families.

It is important to examine the consequences of diverting scarce Australian foreign aid dollars to providing abortions.

That money has to be diverted from somewhere. Do we really want to cut aid funding to programs that focus on poverty alleviation and development.

Do we want to reduce funding to vital literacy, nutrition and health programs, or to providing clean water to Third World communities. Of course we do not.

To take one example, let's look at the health issue. The World Health Organisation reported that tuberculosis and malaria account for about three million deaths a year, but both diseases are preventable and treatable. The case for more funding is obvious.

No-one wants to slash funding from any of these areas—from poverty alleviation or from development, literacy, nutrition and health programs—because they are all so important and necessary.

FAMILY FIRST also believes it is important to remember what happened to Australian aid money before these sensible restrictions were imposed on how the money could be spent.

Australian aid dollars went to the United Nations Population Fund, which was involved with China's brutal and abhorrent one-child policy, under which there were forced abortions and forced sterilisations.

Australian aid money also went to population control programs in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands. In Indonesia, the long-acting hormonal contraceptive implant Norplant was promoted as a beauty aid.

Senators might be aware that population controllers promote implants because, once they are inserted under the skin, poor women cannot easily get them out.

These are some of the reasons Australia has quite rightly steered away from funding abortion and contraception services.

FAMILY FIRST is concerned that the world's biggest abortion provider, Marie Stopes International Australia, enjoys full accreditation status with AusAID as a non-government organisation to receive foreign aid funds.

It is extremely disturbing that already Australian aid money is going to such organisations, and some campaigners are lobbying for more.

FAMILY FIRST is concerned that, by funding an abortion provider, even though the money is not for abortion, the Australian government is giving the organisation special status and credibility. In the eyes of many people, the government is endorsing this organisation.

The Australian government should not provide money to such organisations and should not change its policy on provision of aid funds for abortion related activities.