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Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

Call for global gender parity on International Women's Day

Gender equality has made great strides in recent decades but we have a long way to go close the gender gap says Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) President Professor Heather Yeatman.

This year's International Women's Day theme is Pledge for Parity focussing on achieving global gender parity and to close the gender gap.

"Women's rights are an important part of health and the only way to achieve equitable health is to achieve equitable rights. Women have specific health needs and if these are not addressed women are left to feel vulnerable and unsafe," said Professor Yeatman.

"There are many issues with some of particular concern including violence against women, pay equity and fertility control," said Professor Yeatman.

"Australia needs to make gender parity a priority by having policies and practices in place to protect women. Women deserve to feel safe and have the same access to health care resources no matter their background," said Professor Yeatman.

PHAA representatives attended the [UN Women Australia International Women's Day](#) lunch in Canberra on Friday 4 March. The main theme was violence against women especially in the south pacific. Globally, [one woman in three](#) will experience violence in her lifetime and it is the [leading cause of death and disability of women of all ages](#).

"Violence against women is a global issue and is causing damage to our community – women, children and men. It is a systemic issue leading to mental and physical health problems for women and their children," said Professor Yeatman.

"Fertility control is another important factor relating to women's health. Without proper education and access to medication, women's reproductive rights are compromised. All women should have access to safe services to ensure they have a choice when it comes to fertility," says PHAA CEO Michael Moore.

"Sexual and reproductive health is a human right and needs to be considered when addressing women's equity. This issue is specific to women so services should be specific to their needs and not limited by discrimination based on age, cultural background, language, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or religion."

"International Women's Day is a time to stop and look at the issues affecting women globally and ask: is enough being done to achieve gender parity? PHAA aims to close the gender gap and ensure health equity for women nationally and internationally," concluded Mr Moore.

For further information/comment:

Professor Heather Yeatman

0409 849 679

Sophie Brown PHAA (Michael Moore comment)

0421 749 608