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For immediate release

## **NAPCAN position statement: female genital mutilation**

Female genital mutilation and cutting is a dangerous and irreversible procedure performed involuntarily on girls (usually aged 5 to 10 years) with horrendous effects on a girl's health, child-bearing capabilities and educational opportunities.<sup>i</sup>

NAPCAN is opposed to child abuse. Female genital mutilation is child abuse, not acceptable in any form, and **must remain illegal in Australia**. NAPCAN urges the federal Government to ensure that no Australian girl or woman is subject to genital mutilation or cutting.

Along with increased parental education and law enforcement, the government must also take action to make it illegal to take girls overseas to have genital mutilation performed.

Australia has international legal obligations to protect children. In 1990, Australia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which underpins all NAPCAN's work. Under the treaty, the Australian Government is legally bound to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.<sup>ii</sup>

In February 2010, the World Medical Association and the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics called to eliminate the practice, stating that:

"Death, severe pain, hemorrhage, tetanus, sepsis, recurrent urinary tract infections, pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, increased complications of subsequent pregnancy and childbirth, as well as adverse psychological and sexual effects are just a few examples of its extreme consequences. The practice of FGM violates human rights principles."<sup>iii</sup>

Yesterday, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement condemning all forms of female genital mutilation. It retracted a recent policy statement that had endorsed a so-called "ritual nick" of girls' genitalia.<sup>iv</sup>

The United Nations says three million girls are cut each year. It estimates that 120 to 140 million women alive today have been subjected to it.<sup>v</sup>

**Ends**

**For further information please contact:**

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NAPCAN (National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) is a leading advocate for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. NAPCAN's goal is to bring about the changes necessary in individual and community behavior and in government policy to stop abuse and neglect before it starts.

NAPCAN also works directly with children and young people conducting innovative programs to strengthen protective behaviors build resilience and life skills. NAPCAN also assists 'at risk' parents by working in local communities building inclusive networks and strengthening local support of children and families. For further information go to: [www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au)

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<sup>i</sup> For further information, see [http://www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_25032.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_25032.html)

<sup>ii</sup> Article 24(3), Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> See <http://www.figo.org/news/physicians-call-elimination-female-genital-mutilation>

<sup>iv</sup> See <http://www.healthfinder.gov/news/newsstory.aspx?docID=639557>

<sup>v</sup> See <http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/un-agency-says-3-million-girls-risk-genital-mutilation-each-year-2010020843697.html> dated 8 February 2010