

Australian Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance Agreement

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Background

The Australian Sexual Health Alliance (ASHA) was formed in 2011 consisting of a coalition of multi-disciplinary organisations with a common interest in improving sexual and reproductive health in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific region.

An agreement establishing ASHA was created in December 2011 with the founding member organisations:

- Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) formerly named the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine
- Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine (AChSHM)
- Australasian Sexual Health and HIV Nurses Association (ASHHNA)
- Australian Society of Sexuality Educators, Researchers & Therapists (ASSERT)
- New Zealand Sexual Health Society (NZSHS)
- Sexual Health Society of Queensland (SHSQ)
- Sexual Health Society of Victoria (SHSOV)

The Establishing Agreement outlines the purpose, objectives, and scope of the ASRHA and expired on 30 December 2015.

In May 2020, a Model of Collaboration (MoC) was developed between the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) and ASHA. The MoC outlines the nature of the collaboration between the two organisations including the support that each provides for each other and the membership arrangements. It also recognised the membership of a range of other organisations as members of ASRHA, including:

- Family Planning Alliance Australia (FPAA)
- Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health, and Society (ARCSHS)
- The Centre for Social Research in Health (CSRH) at UNSW Sydney
- Forensic And Medical Sexual Assault Clinicians Australia (FAMSACA)
- Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA)
- Society of Australian Sexologists (SAS)
- STI Program Unit NSW Health (STIPU)

In 2021, as part of the MoC formation, membership was reviewed and there was agreement from member organisations that ASHA be renamed The Australian Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance (ASRHA).

This Alliance Agreement document augments the Establishing Agreement and MoC and with the rebranding as ASRHA, updates the aims and scope of ASRHA, outlines its values and areas of strategic focus.

Principles of ASRHA

ASRHA acknowledges and affirms that sexual and reproductive health:

- is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality and the reproductive system and its functions and processes; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity (1, 2),
- is closely linked to, and that collaborative work is necessary to achieve, the SDG target 3.7 of universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services by 2030 (3, 4),
- implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how to do so (2),
- requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships (5),
- requires the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence (1),
- that sexual and reproductive health includes the rights of all people “to be informed [about] and to have access to safe, effective, affordable, and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of birth control which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health-care services”. (2)

ASRHA values the multi-disciplinary workforce that are engaged in addressing sexual and reproductive health including medical, nursing, allied and public health professionals, researchers, and academics as well professionals in the education, justice, and community sectors (teachers and other educators, lawyers, youth workers).

ASRHA affirms its convening role to facilitate the engagement of multi-disciplinary organisations across sexual and reproductive health to ensure inclusive and diverse input into education, advocacy, policy and networking events.

Aims of ASRHA

Collaboration

- To coordinate, promote, support and facilitate the development of collaborative efforts in pursuit of sexual and reproductive health, at all levels and between respective stakeholders.

Education

- To advance, promote and facilitate multi-disciplinary educational opportunities for professionals working in the fields of sexual and reproductive health.
- To advance, support, and promote good quality evidence-informed sex, sexuality and relationships education across the life course, including within the community and with young people in and out of school.

Advocacy

- To identify opportunities for, and undertake, sexual and reproductive health advocacy nationally, regionally, and internationally to develop public policy, raise awareness, reduce the burden of sexual and reproductive ill-health, and advance equity and equality.

Outputs

Aligned with the three aims ASRHA will deliver output according to its yearly plan. These will include:

- Convening the annual Australasian Sexual Health Conference and reproductive health events

- Contributing to the development and updating of policy and guidelines
- Celebrating the achievements of outstanding professionals working in the field
- Communicating relevant news, events, and resources to members and beyond, on the web and through social media

Membership

ASRHA membership arrangements and executive composition are outlined in the MoC.

Governance

ASRHA governance arrangements in relation to ASHM are outlined in the MoC and include:

- Contributing to the ASHM Board sexual health sub-committee, providing support to ASHM management in sector leadership, and engagement in proactive thinking and strategic action planning

This document will be reviewed periodically and in line with the ASHM MoC.

References

1. https://www.who.int/health-topics/sexual-health#tab=tab_1
2. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/international-conference-population-and-development-programme-action>
3. https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/sexual_health/sh-linkages-rh/en/
4. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>
5. <https://worldsexualhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Declaration-of-Sexual-Rights-2014-plain-text.pdf>