



These are support services for women, girls and families across Australia that provide information, advice and assistance with service navigation.

South Australia - The Refugee Health Service

P: 08 7133 996

W: www.calhn.sa.gov.au/refugee-health-service

Queensland - True Relationships and Reproductive Health

P: (07) 3250 0240

E: culturallyresponsive@true.org.au

New South Wales - NSW Education Program on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

P: (02) 9840 4182 or (02) 9840 3877

W: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/female-genital-cutting-circumcision-fgc

E: WSLHD-FGMEducationProgram@health.nsw.gov.au

Western Australia - Womens Health Strategy and Programs

P: 08 6458 1152

E: KEMH.WomensHealthStrategyandPrograms@health.wa.gov.au

Victoria - The Family and Reproductive Rights Program

W: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/female-genital-cutting-circumcision-fgc

P: Visit the website above to contact the organisation in your local area

Contact the Royal Women Hospital FGM clinic for access to deinfibulation services.

Tasmania - Redcross, Bicultural Community Health Program

P: (03) 6235 6077

W: www.redcross.org.au/migration/bicultural-health-service-in-tasmania

E: Tasbiculturalhealth@redcross.org.au



Call the **National Translating and Interpreting Service** (TIS National) on **131 450** if you need to speak to someone in a language other than English. **A free and confidential interpreter** can connect you to any phone number listed above.



MULTICULTURAL
CENTRE FOR
WOMEN'S HEALTH

Female Circumcision in Australia

Female circumcision is sometimes referred to as Female Genital Cutting or Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C). It involves cutting or causing harm to the female genital area for non-medical reasons. Female circumcision has no health benefit to women and girls and can have a negative impact on their sexual and reproductive health.

It is a harmful practice that can be viewed by family and community members as an important cultural tradition. However, there are ways we can honour and value our culture while leaving behind practices that can cause harms.

To have control over and protect our own bodies, we all need to be treated with dignity and respect. This is everyone's right as a human being. There are support, advice and information available across all states and territories on female circumcision.



Human Rights

Female circumcision is recognised internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

This resource has been developed by the Supporting Workers in FGM/C Training (SWIFT) project, funded by the Australian Government. Last updated: Mar 2026



Health issues

Female circumcision has short- and long-term health consequences including:

- Physical health issues: severe pain, bleeding, infection, scarring, menstruation and urinary problems (such as when you wee).
- Pregnancy and childbirth risks: prolonged labour, tearing and bleeding.
- Psychological impacts: feeling trauma, anxiety, and less enjoyment in sex, or having problems in relationships.

Some women and girls may not show any symptoms, while others may experience multiple complications. If you are experiencing any concerns or complications, contact a healthcare provider for support.



Where is female circumcision practised?

Over 230 million women and girls around the world have been circumcised. The practice can be found in communities and certain ethnic groups in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

An estimated 53,000 women and girls living in Australia have undergone FGM/C.¹

Not all communities in countries where female circumcision is practiced perform circumcision, sometimes it is only practiced by a small minority.

The origin of female circumcision is unknown and has no religious significance. Countries around the world are moving away from this harmful practice and making it illegal.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). *Towards estimating the prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting in Australia* (Cat. no. PHE 230). Canberra: AIHW



There are different types of female circumcision.

Female circumcision is not always the same and can result in different kinds of changes to the female genital area. The type of circumcision can vary between communities and ethnic groups. Some types involve only small changes, while others involve more major procedures and complications.

A smaller proportion of women have undergone the most extensive form of female circumcision, which involves narrowing the vaginal opening.

Women who have experienced this type of cutting may require support from a doctor or midwife during pregnancy and childbirth.



What does the law say about female circumcision in Australia?

It is important to know that it is against the law and you have a right to say no.

It is against the law to:

- *Remove or cut any part of the female genital area*
- *Stitch or re-stitch up the female genital area*
- *Narrow the vaginal opening*
- *Cut or prick the clitoris*
- *Damage or cause injury to the female genital area*

The Law forbids a person to:

- *Cut a woman or girl child*
- *Take a person out of Australia to be cut*
- *To help take a person out of Australia to be cut*

You should not:

- *Carry out the procedure*
- *Help carry out the procedure*
- *Find someone to carry out the procedure*

Female circumcision carries a penalty of up to 21 years imprisonment.

Some families may feel pressure to continue female circumcision when returning to their country of origin. It is important to know that you have the right to say no. Many families in Australia and around the world choose not to continue this practice, and it is completely OK to protect your daughter from harm.