

## ***Repli identitaire*: gender, reproductive health and reproductive rights in refugee women in Melbourne, Australia**

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The reproductive rights movement played an important role in raising awareness of and campaigning against rights violations such as female genital cutting. The peak period of the global campaign in the late 80s and 90s coincided with a wave of migration, largely forced, from countries of high prevalence of the practice (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan), to countries in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The settlement services, including the health and welfare sectors geared up to address the needs of these new and emerging communities. Of particular focus in Australia, were programs to address the prevention and management of female genital cutting in these communities which was considered antithetical to cultural, medical and legal practice and universally condemned.

The programs have enjoyed varying degrees of success across states in Australia. There is some evidence to suggest however, that the success is declining. There are several reasons for this and I will touch on them in the presentation. The main focus of this paper, however is on *repli identitaire*, the rejection of the dominant culture and retreat into ethnic identity by this visible minority group in response to the anti-Islamic and anti migrant sentiment which has increased in Australia over the last 5 years. This is manifest by increasing numbers of young mothers seeking to have their girl children excised. In addition, young women who are old enough to give consent and had not been excised are presenting with requests for excision.

The paper will briefly present the results of a reproductive health study of Horn of African and Middle Eastern refugee women in Melbourne, discussing the tensions between identity, policy, rights, ethics and reproductive health practice.