

Question on Notice
No. 125
Asked on 7 March 2013

MR STEVENS asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

QUESTION:

It has been reported by multicultural sector workers that the practice of female genital circumcision has been sought after in Queensland, will the Minister advise what measures are in place in Queensland to ensure this abhorrent practice will continue to be prohibited?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Mermaid Beach for his question.

The practice of female genital circumcision, commonly referred to as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), is illegal in Queensland under section 323A of the *Criminal Code Act 1899* (the Criminal Code). The removal of a child from the State in order to undergo the practice of Female Genital Mutilation is also illegal under the Criminal Code (s.323B). Both crimes carry a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment.

Department of Health employees are obligated to report female genital mutilation, or persons at risk of female genital mutilation, to the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the Queensland Police Service.

Clinicians may encounter women who have already had female genital mutilation performed (in their own countries before arrival) when they present for care. The Department of Health *Queensland Maternity and Neonatal Clinical Guideline: Perineal Care* incorporates care considerations for these women, for whom there is a risk of perineal injury and the need for specialised care during childbirth.

The Queensland Government approach to this issue is aligned with the 2012 United Nations General Assembly resolution on the elimination of female genital mutilation. At this point in time, there is nothing that would lead me to believe that there will be any softening of the Queensland Government position on this issue.