LONG ACTING REVERSIBLE CONTRACEPTION (LARC)  

POSITION STATEMENT

BACKGROUND
A Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) method is one that requires administration less than once per month. LARC includes hormonal or copper-bearing intrauterine devices (IUDs), the hormonal contraceptive implant and the hormonal contraceptive injection Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate (DMPA). Due to its high discontinuation rate and frequent administration schedule DMPA is not included within the scope of this statement.

LARC is more effective in preventing unintended pregnancy and has higher continuation rates than shorter acting methods including the contraceptive pill.

Uptake of LARC in Australia is low in comparison to other developed countries. Whilst there is no routine national data collection on contraception usage, recent survey data suggests that implant, injectable and intrauterine device (IUD) methods combined are used by fewer than 10% of Australian women.

There is no conclusive evidence that identifies reasons why LARC uptake is low in Australia.

Abortion rates are a proxy measure of the prevalence of unintended pregnancy. There is no national data collection on the incidence of induced abortion in Australia. However, in 2004 the number was estimated to be 83,000 which equates to one abortion for every four known pregnancies.

Unintended pregnancy among Australian women is considered to be a significant public health issue.

Multiple factors influence a woman’s decision to use LARC including access, lack of awareness and information as well as misconceptions about their safety and side-effects.

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3,4,5 Family Planning New South Wales 2013, Reproductive and Sexual Health in Australia, Family Planning NSW, Ashfield, NSW.