

Bishop says no backflip on family planning aid

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Date : June 23, 2013

The abortion issue has fired up in the Australian media this month after it was raised by the Prime Minister in a speech to female supporters.

Gillard's allegations that a Coalition government could impact on reproductive choice sparked a [flurry of op-ed pieces](#), with [some](#) of them speculating that AusAID's funding for family planning or reproductive health programs may be curtailed if Senator John Madigan gains an influential spot in the post-election Senate line-up. Madigan is currently pushing a bill to end 'sex-selective' abortion in Australia.

Madigan's firm anti-abortion stance has been [widely documented](#), and he has cited Senator Brian Harradine as a role model. As a result of a deal struck between Harradine and the Howard government to pass the privatisation of Telstra in 1996, the AusAID Family Planning Guidelines were implemented. The guidelines prohibited agencies receiving Australian aid from providing advice or counselling on abortion. In 2009, they were [modified](#) to remove this restriction.

In response to the recent concerns, Opposition Foreign Affairs Spokeswoman Julie Bishop [told journalist Jacqueline Maley](#) that there were no plans for changes to AusAID policy or funding to organisations that provide abortion advice.

"There will be no change to the current approach in this specific area," she said.