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WOMEN SEEK RISKY COSMETIC SURGERY BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT NORMAL GENITALS LOOK LIKE

Women's Health Victoria will today launch an Issues Paper on female genital cosmetic surgery, and hopes that the paper will help generate debate among health professionals and advocates about how to respond to the emergence of these controversial procedures.

'Women can spend anywhere between \$4,000 on a labioplasty to \$13,000 if they get a labioplasty and vaginal tightening at the same time', said Rita Butera, Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria.

'We are concerned that women are not aware of the risks involved in undergoing genital cosmetic surgery. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has strongly discouraged cosmetic vaginal procedures, and points to the lack of evidence from clinical trials,' Ms Butera said.

However, the number of women undergoing Medicare-funded procedures such as labioplasty and vulvoplasty continues to rise.

'We believe that women's decisions are partly based on a lack of knowledge about how natural female genitals actually look. There is a misconception that the labia minora should not protrude beyond the labia majora, but that is simply not true. The reality is that female genitals come in all shapes and sizes- just like any other part of the human body,' Ms Butera said.

'We are particularly concerned that some women may not be aware of the extent of natural variation among female genitals because pictures of genitals are digitally removed or minimised before publication in magazines. This may encourage women to consider surgery as an option for what are perfectly normal and healthy genitals', Ms Butera said.

The *Women and Genital Cosmetic Surgery Issues Paper* is available from:
<http://whv.org.au/publications-resources/publications-resources-by-topic/post/women-and-genital-cosmetic-surgery-issues-paper/>

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