



Victorian Abortion Sector Statement on Roe v. Wade, 27 June 2022

Abortion in Australia is legal, and must remain accessible

There is no place for misinformation and stigma in healthcare

The Victorian abortion sector is extremely concerned to see the news that landmark abortion access legislation in America, known as Roe v. Wade, has been overturned.

Abortion is a safe and common medical procedure that enables women and people with uteruses to exercise their reproductive rights and autonomy. Access to sexual and reproductive health care including abortion is central to gender equality and promoting the rights of women and people with uteruses. Criminalising abortion forces pregnant people to either have unsafe abortions or to bring unwanted or unviable pregnancies to term, and further entrenches gender inequality. It prevents women and people with uteruses from choosing when they will become pregnant and give birth. The Victorian abortion sector stands in solidarity with all pregnant people and abortion providers affected by abortion criminalisation both in America and around the world.

Victoria has some of the strongest and most progressive abortion legislation in Australia, with bipartisan support to maintain this situation. Safe access zones protect abortion providers and abortion seekers from the misinformation and abuse of anti-choice protestors, and abortions are available by choice up to 24 weeks gestation. This legislation, which was fought for by generations of women and healthcare providers, remains in place to protect Victorians' reproductive autonomy. All women and pregnant people have the right to choose whether to continue or end a pregnancy within Victoria's legislative framework and make decisions that are right for them.

Despite this legislative context, there remain significant access barriers for abortion seekers. These range from practical considerations such as geographical location, financial cost, Medicare and visa status, language barriers, as well as social and other factors. Due to its foundations in criminalisation, stigma remains one of the most significant barriers to abortion care. Women and people with uteruses from underserved or vulnerable populations are disproportionately impacted by these barriers.

Regressive abortion legislation worldwide has the potential to impact local providers and people needing services by making it harder to access services for fear of judgement and discrimination and causing stress and burnout for abortion providers. Misinformation and stigma harm women and people with uteruses, putting their health and lives at risk, and denying them their reproductive rights. The Victorian sexual and reproductive health system will continue to work to reduce the impacts of stigma and discrimination on abortion care, promoting access to services and strengthening system capacity to respond to the needs of Victorians.

We appreciate that in Victoria bipartisan political support has built and maintained human rights and public health-based abortion legislation. We call upon governments and MPs across Australia to continue to commit to and invest in affordable abortion care as a vital part of mainstream health care. We stand with abortion seekers and abortion providers across the world to uphold the reproductive rights of all women and people with uteruses to access safe, affordable, legal and culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health services free from stigma, harassment and discrimination where-ever they live.

To find pro-choice healthcare professionals including abortion and contraception providers in Victoria, call 1800 My Options on 1800 696 784 or www.1800myoptions.org.au

If, when seeking an abortion, your doctor has failed or refused to refer you to another doctor or service who can provide you with information on abortion you can make a complaint to the Health Complaints Commissioner or the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

Victorian Abortion Sector Signatories



1800 696 784

For information about contraception, pregnancy options and sexual health.



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About Women's Health Victoria

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, state-wide women's health promotion, information and advocacy service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV works collaboratively with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women. The work of WHV is underpinned by a social model of health and a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants. **For more information, visit whv.org.au**