

PRESS RELEASE

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Overwhelming support for abortion decriminalisation in Queensland: new poll

The vast majority of Queenslanders want to see abortion decriminalised in Queensland, a new poll by Fair Agenda released today shows. A significant majority of Queenslanders would also be less likely to vote for an MP who voted to maintain the current criminalisation.

A survey of 1,201 adults across Queensland showed that 82% of Queenslanders agree it should be legal for a woman, in consultation with a medical professional, to decide to terminate her pregnancy. 60% indicated they would be less likely to vote for an MP who voted for abortion to remain a crime.

“Queensland’s current laws are a hundred years out of date and out of line with community values. This polling confirms that Queenslanders want better.” said Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

“To continue to deny women the legal right to make decisions about their own fertility and health is totally unacceptable. Today’s polling results show it also politically untenable.” Ms Carr added.

In response to reports that the LNP may prevent its MPs from casting a conscience vote, Ms Carr added: “The vast majority of Queenslanders, and 80% of the LNPs own supporters, recognise a woman’s legal right to access an abortion. If the LNP refuse to support decriminalisation it would be a complete failure to represent Queenslanders on this issue.”

“Queensland women deserve for this to be a priority and MPs should be treating it as such. In fact almost half of LNP supporters are less likely to vote for an MP that opposes decriminalising abortion.”

Further, 70% of those polled agreed that Queensland women should have the same legal rights as their Victorian counterparts. In Victoria laws similar to those currently before the Queensland parliament apply. A huge 88% of respondents agreed that women should have the same access to medical procedures - including pregnancy terminations - as women in the city.

Amanda Bradley from Children by Choice added: “The situation is so absurd that we have women turning to us for financial assistance because current laws make it almost impossible to get the help they need at public hospitals. This has a particularly stark impact on women in rural and regional areas where access to health care is already more limited.”

“Almost half of the funds we've had to raise to help women in need cover their costs are for women who have already been subjected to sexual assault or domestic violence - that our parliament could decide to continue subjecting them to further trauma by continuing to criminalise their - and others - healthcare decisions is horrendous.”

Young mother Karla Wareham-Deane added: “As a Queenslander, a lawyer, a mother, and a woman, I'm horrified that we're even debating this in 2017.”

MEDIA CONTACT

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AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT

- Renee Carr - Executive Director of Fair Agenda
- Amanda Bradley, Manager, Children By Choice - regarding access and provision of termination procedures in Qld
- Michael Moore, CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia - who can comment from a medical / public health perspective
- Kath Kerr, Social Worker at Women's Legal Service Queensland - on the importance of access to full reproductive healthcare for women trying to escape family violence
- Dr Heather McNamee, Cairns Doctor and abortion provider
- Professor Caroline de Costa, James Cook University - academic and doctor
- Karla Wareham-Deane - young Queensland mother and lawyer

Additional quotes from Michael Moore, Public Health Association

“This is a healthcare issue, and should be dealt with like any other health matter. To have the Government interfering in a woman's right to make this or any other health care decision for herself is wildly inappropriate.”

“The notion of applying the same approach to this medical procedure as we did a hundred years ago is ludicrous and inappropriate.”

“The current laws are bad for women, and bad for our health system. Right now we have legislation that is blocking doctors from fulfilling their first duty - to provide the best possible patient care.”

“For the parliament to choose to continue criminalising women and their doctors in this way would be a shocking failure”.

“Our laws should recognise a woman’s right to control all aspects of her own health, including her fertility.”

Additional quotes from Kate Kerr, Women’s Legal Service Queensland

"For a number of women who have turned to Women’s Legal Service for help to escape their abusive partner, the current, outdated laws are making it even more difficult to access the services they desperately need, including pregnancy termination options."

"All too often we see perpetrators of abuse limiting their partner's access to contraceptive and reproductive healthcare - and also using unwanted pregnancy as a way to try and trap their partner."

"Having access to all reproductive health care options can be vital for a woman who is trying to escape an abusive partner."

"For a woman who is facing emotional, financial and physical abuse - unwanted pregnancy can be devastating, and access to all reproductive health care options is critical for those who want to choose abortion to help them get safe from escalating violence and control."

“The last thing we want is to continue the current climate where women are forced to continue a pregnancy against their will because the access barriers to abortion are too great to overcome. For women experiencing domestic violence, they are then tied to an abusive partner forever as co-parents.”

Additional quotes from young Queensland mother Karla Wareham-Deane

“The notion that politicians are still making this type of decision about Queensland women’s fertility and reproductive healthcare is absurd.

“The only person who is ever going to be in a position to make a decision about her reproductive health is the woman in question. Our laws should be empowering her to make that decision, not criminalising her for doing so.”