

19 November 2017

Handmaids are asking Queenslanders to vote pro-choice this election

People dressed as Handmaids have begun appearing around Brisbane, urging voters to vote pro-choice this election.

Their blood red robes and white winged bonnets reference recent TV sensation, *The Handmaid's Tale* - about a fundamentalist conservative nation where fertile women are denied bodily autonomy, and are forced to carry pregnancies against their will.

Brisbane's Handmaids have mobilised as part of a campaign run by independent community group Fair Agenda to end the criminalisation of abortion in Queensland.

"Many Queenslanders don't know that abortion access is effectively on the ballot at this election: the person you vote for could determine whether or not abortion remains in the Criminal Code in Queensland," said Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

"Right now there aren't enough pro-choice champions in parliament to end these cruel and degrading laws. But at this election we can change that."

"More than 140 candidates have taken Fair Agenda's pro-choice pledge, and committed to support a woman's right to access safe and legal abortion. But there are many others who want to keep treating abortion as a crime, or who haven't answered our question about their position." Ms Carr concluded.

'Handmaid' Susan Harris-Rimmer added: "We're out here to make voters aware of this problem, and to remind pro-choice voters to find out where their local candidates stand on this issue, so they can cast a vote in line with their values."

"Queensland's laws in this area are absolutely archaic. They mean women in need are frequently refused help at public hospitals. It's horrifying."

"Candidates are expected to cast a personal "conscience" vote on issues like this. So it's really important to find out where they personally stand on this issue."

So far 146 candidates have taken Fair Agenda's pro-choice candidate pledge; and 160 in total have provided a response to the group's question about their stance on abortion law reform.

Fair Agenda have today launched a tool to help voters see their local candidates' responses to Fair Agenda's pro-choice pledge question, so they can find out whether their local candidate represents them on this important issue.

An Essential Poll from February this year showed that 82% of Queenslanders support a woman's right to choose, but only 58% know that abortion is still in the Criminal Code.

Fair Agenda's new tool for voters is at www.voteaprochoice.com.au

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Also available for comment: Sue Harris-Rimmer, Handmaid

Fair Agenda can provide high quality photos from the action, and also video content to embed in your story on request.