

Local MP praised for bravery and leadership in supporting legal abortion care

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Chatsworth MP Steve Minnikin has been praised by constituents, community groups, medical and legal experts for supporting legal access to abortion care in parliament yesterday.

Mr Minnikin told parliament: "I believe in the fundamental right of women to be treated as equal members of a free society which acknowledges that although there are obvious differences in men's and women's physiology, there should be no difference in their opportunity to have sovereign reign over their own bodies."

"The lack of certainty under the current provisions as to when a termination is lawful negatively impacts the accessibility and the availability of termination services by causing fear and stigma for women, and reluctance by some health practitioners to provide such services.

"If we as a society start saying that a foetus has a right to life that overrides the pregnant woman's right to give or deny consent and by law forces women to continue pregnancies against their will & without their consent, then effectively we would be giving a foetus more rights than an actual person and, as a logical extension and corollary, we would be giving pregnant women less rights than a corpse.

"I believe that all Queensland women should have the fundamental human right to elect this privilege and not have it thrust upon them as a punishment for being sexually active or having an unplanned pregnancy. No-one should be forced to endure a pregnancy they do not want when safe, modern medical options are available to assist them."

"If we are truly to be a modern, egalitarian state in the 21st Century we need to decriminalise archaic laws contained in an Act from the 19th Century. This is not about semantics; it is about legal freedom of choice."

Carina resident Kate Marchesi said: "I couldn't be prouder of my local member's stance on this issue. It's clear Mr Minnikin has thought carefully about this issue, and in exercising his own conscience has not only listened to the evidence of experts but also the lived experiences of women. I know many women who have been affected by this archaic law, I sincerely thank Mr Minnikin for his commitment to standing up for the rights of Queensland women to access basic healthcare and make decisions about their lives."

Chatsworth constituent and Social Worker Lulu Milne said: "I wish to thank Steve Minnikin MP for his support for Qld women's right to choose. As a social worker at Women's Legal Service Qld, we support many women seeking to separate from abusive partners who already face significant barriers in accessing housing, independent income and legal protection."

“Pregnancy is a high risk time for domestic violence, with abuse often starting or escalating at pregnancy. If women are also seeking an abortion it is unfair for them to face further barriers to access the procedure and also feel criminalised. We know that women and children are safer when they are empowered to make their own decisions and supported in their decisions. I thank Steve Minnikin MP for recognising that women are best positioned to make decisions about their own reproductive health and safety.” Ms Milne concluded.

Dr Nicole Gastaldin said: “Right now, women from Carindale and Carina have to face a gauntlet of abuse and harassment as they enter our clinic for reproductive healthcare services. Mr Minnikin’s vote will mean that they have the privacy and dignity they deserve.”

Professor of obstetrics and gynaecology Caroline De Costa said: “These changes have been backed by RANZCOG, they’re well and truly overdue. Doctors should be able to provide the best care possible without fear of criminal charges. I commend Mr Minnikin on his outstanding speech and steadfast support for women’s reproductive health.”

Professor of Law and former Law Reform Commissioner Heather Douglas added: “These laws will finally provide legal certainty for doctors and patients. As a lawyer I applaud Mr Minnikin for supporting them.”

Executive Director of Fair Agenda Renee Carr added: “The previous laws were archaic, cruel and degrading. They increased the distress, delay and financial burden faced by Queenslanders who have made the decision to end a pregnancy. They also meant women in need were often turned away when seeking care at public hospitals.”

“The new laws are strong legislation that is going to pave the way for more compassionate access to reproductive healthcare in Queensland. They will improve the care options available to women in rural and regional areas, and also reduce the distress and difficulty faced by women affected by domestic violence. We applaud Mr Minnikin for his commitment to supporting these desperately needed reforms.” Ms Carr added.

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