



## Experts launch public call for NSW abortion reform

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Doctors, lawyers, healthcare groups and domestic violence services joined community organisations today to launch an open letter calling for the NSW Parliament to recognise the right to safe and legal abortion access in the state.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Australian College of Nursing, Public Health Association of Australia and Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia are just some of the organisations that have signed on to the call for reform to the NSW abortion laws.

The signatories to the letter call the current NSW abortion laws “archaic, cruel and degrading”, and point to the distress, delay and financial burden they create, particularly for women in rural and remote areas.

“The criminalisation of abortion leads to negative health outcomes for women and significantly reduces their autonomy over their reproductive health” said Terry Slevin, CEO of Public Health Association of Australia.

“We need to decriminalise abortion so that health professionals can provide patients with the best care possible, without fear of criminal prosecution. It's ridiculous that laws from 1900 are restricting the ability of doctors and nurses to provide care in 2018.” she added.

“These laws restrict doctors from providing a full range of reproductive health services and make it difficult for women to access the care they need. Modern healthcare best practice makes women feel safe and in control of their bodies. In contrast, these laws are harmful, outdated and put real constraints around women’s reproductive choices,” said Dr Deborah Bateson at Family Planning NSW

The action comes just days after the South Australian parliament introduced legislation to decriminalise abortion.

“It’s ridiculous that in this day and age a woman in NSW is denied the legal right to make decisions about what is best for her health, her body and her family,” said Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda. “Last week South Australia initiated the second reform of its abortion laws. Yet access to this healthcare in NSW is still limited by laws written in 1900.”

“NSW is the only state where abortion laws are stuck in an era when women were considered incapable of making decisions about their own bodies. Abortion is the only medical procedure that is criminalised.” added Wendy McCarthy, Women’s Electoral Lobby Decriminalisation Roundtable Chair.

“NSW stands shamefully alone in failing to reform its abortion laws for over 100 years. Every day, women in NSW are treated as second class citizens when it comes to accessing healthcare because of the criminalisation of abortion,” said Adrienne Walters, senior lawyer at the Human Rights Law Centre.

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Available for comment:

- Dr Deb Bateson via FPNSW media 0402 880 653
- Terry Slevin, Public Health Association of Australia, via PHAA media 0450 522 762
- Renee Carr, Fair Agenda, 0435 597 976
- Mary Sullivan, Women's Electoral Lobby, 0419 444 889
- Adrienne Walters, Human Rights Law Centre, 0419 100 519

### **Full list of open letter signatories**

Amnesty International Australia  
Australian College of Nursing  
Australian Lawyers for Human Rights  
Australian Medical Students Association  
Australian Women's Health Network  
Australian Women Lawyers  
Community Legal Centres NSW  
Domestic Violence NSW  
Fair Agenda  
Family Planning NSW  
Human Rights Law Centre  
Kingsford Legal Centre  
Marie Stopes Australia  
National Council of Single Mothers and their Children  
National Foundation for Australian Women  
NSW Council for Civil Liberties  
Our Bodies Our Choices  
Penrith Women's Health Centre  
Pharmaceutical Association of Australia  
Public Health Association of Australia  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre Ltd  
Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia  
Rationalist Association of NSW Inc  
Rationalist Society of Australia  
Reproductive Choice Australia  
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
The Private Clinic  
Women's Abortion Action Campaign  
Women's Electoral Lobby  
Women's Health NSW  
Women Lawyers Association NSW  
Women's Legal Service NSW  
YWCA