

NFAW Submission to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee of the Parliament of Queensland on the *Abortion Law Reform (Woman's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016*.

The National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) is a non-politically aligned feminist organisation committed to examining the potentially differential impact of policies and their outcomes for men and women and whether the consequences of policies, intended or unintended, adversely affect women.

We congratulate the Parliament of Queensland on its consideration of this important matter.

Our position is that every child should be a wanted child, and that parents should have access to good quality information and services which enable them to make decisions as to the numbers and spacing of their children.

We strongly endorse the proposal that abortion should be removed from the criminal law and be governed by the generality of laws and regulations overseeing the rest of medical practice. It is of course vital that medical procedures are carried out by appropriately qualified professionals. That said, we also consider that legal regulation of abortion should not be couched in terms which restrict it to surgical procedures, given the developments of newer uses of medications prescribed by qualified medical professionals.

We see merit in some harmonising of law on this matter between States, and the Queensland Parliament will be able to evaluate the changes which have followed from legislative reviews especially in Tasmania and Victoria. Experience in Victoria, and to a much lesser degree in the ACT, has led to us taking the view that it is appropriate to have provision in legislation to deter opponents of a woman's right to choose being able to intimidate or threaten or obstruct women entering a clinic. In the case of the ACT where a zone has now been put in place, there had certainly been action by opponents which interfered with entry to a major health facility wherein the abortion clinic was but one of many, including clinics for diabetes, mental health services and others.

NFAW supports the provision of appropriately trained and staffed counselling services which enable women to have the opportunity, where they wish, to adequately canvass decisions in advance, and as well to seek any necessary counselling after a procedure.

NFAW appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on the matter of abortion law reform, and has long had established policy positions on sexual health and reproductive rights.

Should the Committee wish to take oral evidence we are happy to provide someone to do so.

Yours sincerely

Mary Crawford
President