




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Women's Health Fact Checker

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.49 am): Today the Attorney-General will introduce legislation to remove abortion from the Criminal Code and instead enshrine current clinical practice in a new health framework. It will make abortion a health matter in Queensland—a decision for a woman to make in consultation with her doctor. A woman should not fear she is breaking the law by seeking a termination. A doctor should not fear they are breaking the law simply by doing their job.

The proposed changes will ensure Queensland women have safe access to medical services. Just like any other health procedure, we want Queenslanders to have all the right facts. There have been some extreme claims made, especially by opponents of these laws. This is why Queensland Health will today launch a new online fact checker to debunk misconceptions surrounding termination. Members of the public and even MPs will be able to submit things they have heard or seen and Queensland Health will provide a response from a qualified medical expert. The site will help members decide their position on the bill according to their conscience, informed by facts.

I know there are varied points of view on this issue. I know that some people feel very strongly about it, but there is no excuse for using lies to justify their position. There is no excuse—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, your language is unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw.

Dr MILES: I withdraw. There is no excuse for Senator Barry O'Sullivan's disgraceful comments in federal parliament on Monday. There is no excuse for claiming women use abortions primarily to choose the sex of their babies. There is no excuse for Cory Bernardi describing women's concerns for their bodily autonomy as 'the trite response that a woman should be able to do with her own body what she wants'. If you ask me, that one should not need fact checking. Woman absolutely should make decisions about their bodies and their health care.

I know we have a robust debate ahead of us, but I hope that it can be carried out with dignity and respect, informed by clinical evidence. We should not tolerate claims designed to scare people, threaten women and shame doctors and nurses. Amid this debate we will not let the facts of clinical practice be obscured. It is important that Queenslanders know the truth from a medical perspective. The online fact checker can be used as a central location for them to find the answers. Each issue or claim will be presented with real facts, backed by experts. I encourage all Queenslanders and members to go online and see the facts for themselves.