




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Termination of Pregnancy; Women and Girls' Health Strategy

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (9.42 am): Every woman and girl in Queensland deserves the right to safe and timely sexual and reproductive health care close to home. That is the commitment we have made in the Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2032. Prior to 2018, termination of pregnancy had been classed as an offence against morality under the Criminal Code of Queensland—a law written before women had the right to vote. The fight to allow access to this health care in this state has been long and hard fought by women for decades. Clinics were raided and attempts were made to prosecute doctors, but the simple fact remains that abortion is a health issue, not a criminal one. Today, because of the advocacy and determination of Queensland women, that simple fact is enshrined in our laws, but the journey to safe and accessible access to reproductive health care does not and cannot end there.

We have heard firsthand about the barriers that exist to accessing these services, particularly women living in rural and remote areas, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women in full-time work. That is why I am pleased to announce that as part of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy our government will be investing \$41.8 million to deliver a five-year Termination of Pregnancy Action Plan. The action plan, to be released later this week, will support more equitable access to termination-of-pregnancy services for Queensland women no matter where they live. It will empower women with the information they need to understand their pregnancy options and pathways, access services and make informed choices. Incentives will include delivering a virtual termination-of-pregnancy service, better education and training for healthcare professionals, more social workers, more counsellors and more nurses.

Our government will always defend a woman's right to make choices about her sexual and reproductive health and we will always look to improve safe and timely access to these services because every single woman deserves access to healthcare services no matter where she lives. I look forward to releasing the action plan and providing more details of the investment later this week—one of our priority actions of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy. Speaking of the Women and Girls' Health Strategy, I want to acknowledge the overwhelmingly positive feedback that our government has received. I have heard from the Women's Health Services Alliance that—

... the commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, and empowerment will bring about transformative changes, creating a more equitable and supportive environment for women and girls.

Women's Health and Equality Queensland has said—

Everyone wins when you prioritise women's health. This Strategy is set to create a real difference in the lives of many women and girls in Queensland.

The Independent Education Union has welcomed the strategy, saying—

Our members cannot undertake their critical roles within schools and childcare centres if their health and wellbeing is not first prioritised ...

Family Planning Alliance Australia, representing family planning services nation-wide including True Relationships and Reproductive Health Queensland, sent thanks for—

... creating such a comprehensive and well-considered Strategy and Investment Plan.

Initiatives like the Women and Girls' Health Strategy matter. They are delivering the support and services Queenslanders need to live happier, healthier lives.