

14 November, 2019

For immediate release from the **South Australian Abortion Action Coalition**

## **saaac welcomes the SA government's commitment to decriminalise abortion as Safe Access Zones are debated in parliament.**

### **Parliamentarians Debate Safe Access Zones Bill Today:**

Debate on Safe Access Zones continues in the South Australian Legislative Council today. Greens MLC, Tammy Franks and Labor MP, Nat Cook introduced the bill to both houses of parliament on 24 September.

The proposed Safe Access Zones would apply to any area within 150 metres of the entrance to an abortion service. This would ensure that patients and staff attending abortion services can arrive and leave free of intimidation and harassment by protestors.

South Australia and Western Australia are the only states without Safe Access Zones. A recent High Court decision upheld Safe Access Zones in Victoria and Tasmania, thereby reasserting the right to unimpeded access to abortion care.

### **Commitment from Attorney General and Minister for Human Services:**

Attorney General, Vickie Chapman, Minister for Health, Stephen Wade, and Minister for Human Services, Michelle Lensink, have signalled the government's intention to decriminalise abortion in South Australia.

This message was delivered on 2 November to a jubilant crowd of around 500 supporters on the steps of Parliament House. It came a day after the Attorney General received the South Australian Law Reform Institute's report examining state laws relating to abortion.

The Attorney General committed to bringing a bill before the parliament in the new year, stating *'Quite simply, women deserve to make autonomous decisions about their bodies, and be treated like any other patient undergoing a medical procedure.'*

Our current laws restrict South Australian women, particularly regional women, from accessing abortion care. They fail to treat women seeking abortion care with the same respect as other medical patients.

South Australia's abortion laws, which 50 years ago led the nation, have not kept up with developments in clinical practice or community expectations. The sooner this is corrected, the sooner our laws will be in line with other Australian jurisdictions and reflect the views of the majority of South Australians.

### **Quotes attributable to Associate Professor, Barbara Baird, spokesperson for Saaac:**

Safe Access Zones are needed at abortion services in this state where protestors regularly attend with the purpose of interfering in women's decision making about their own health care.

This parliament can support women's health care by passing laws to decriminalise abortion and providing Safe Access Zones around abortion services so women can access healthcare free from intimidation.

Health care professionals working with those seeking abortion care have every right to be free from harassment and intimidation as they enter and leave their workplaces. Safe Access Zones will protect this right.

**Quotes attributable to Associate Professor Catherine Kevin, spokesperson for saaac:**

Abortion is a health care procedure, not a crime.

One in three women in South Australia will have an abortion in their lifetime. Abortion is a safe health care procedure and should be treated as such by the law.

Abortion is an accepted and essential health care service and should be regulated as all other health care procedures are. Removing the current legal restrictions will enable equitable access to abortion as early and safely as possible.

It is essential that our politicians listen to women's lived experiences and get this reform right to bring South Australia's laws into line with 21<sup>st</sup> Century health care.

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**About Saaac**

*The South Australian Abortion Action Coalition is a broad coalition of people who want to improve abortion access in South Australia. Our members come from diverse backgrounds including the medical, legal, academic, social justice, and advocacy professions.*