

3 June 2020

Women must have access to abortion free from intimidation and harassment

The South Australian Abortion Action Coalition (saaac) welcomes the introduction of the Safe Access Zone bill in the House of Assembly.

Today the Member for Hurtle Vale Nat Cook MP has introduced the bill in the lower house.

Although the bill passed the upper house last year, the prorogation of parliament prevented the bill progressing through the lower house.

South Australia and Western Australia are the only states without safe access zones.

The proposed Safe Access Zones would apply to any area within 150 meters of the entrance to an abortion service, ensuring that patients accessing abortions and the workers providing their care can do so free of intimidation and harassment by protestors.

In November 2019, the Government accepted recommendations by the South Australian Law Reform Institute that abortion is a health issue and should be removed from the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act*. The Attorney General stated, *"Quite simply, women deserve to make autonomous decisions about their bodies, and be treated like any other patient undergoing a medical procedure."*

South Australia's abortion laws are outdated. The Health Care (Health Access Zones) Amendment bill is the first step towards treating abortion care as health care and extending to patients of abortion services the same respect as other medical patients.

Quotes attributable to Brigid Coomb (nurse and former director of the Pregnancy Advisory Centre) 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.'

Quotes attributable to Associate Professor Barbara Baird (abortion scholar) spokesperson for saaac:

'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.'