

**15 February 2021****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Experts and community groups back public call for abortion reform**

32 health, legal and community organisations have joined together to launch an open letter calling on Members of Parliament to be on the right side of history, and vote in support of the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2020, due to be debated next week.

The open letter, led by Fair Agenda and the South Australian Abortion Action Coalition, has been signed by RANZCOG, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch), Public Health Association of Australia, Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia, Shine SA and the South Australian Council of Social Service, among others.

The joint letter states: *“The Bill promotes the autonomy, dignity and wellbeing of patients who need to end a pregnancy - by providing a pathway to a more compassionate reproductive healthcare system for South Australians.”* The joint letter also notes that current laws *“delay and complicate patient care, increase patient distress, and disproportionately harm members of the community who already face barriers to accessing healthcare.”*

The signatories to the joint letter expressed particular support for provisions relating to abortion care later in pregnancy; and provisions that ensure health practitioners’ personal beliefs don’t interfere with patient access to timely care.

“This Bill is about creating a more compassionate healthcare system, and removing barriers to patients accessing the care they need, when they need it. It will finally allow South Australians the dignity of making decisions about their own reproductive healthcare, and introduce a legal framework similar to that already in place in Victoria, NSW and Queensland.” said Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

“The current system causes unnecessary harm to those already dealing with complex and distressing circumstances - including those affected by rape and domestic violence. The proposed laws are a medically appropriate and compassionate model for reform,” she added.

South Australian Abortion Action Coalition Co-Convenor Brigid Coombe said: “We have the chance to remove abortion from the Crimes Act and finally move our state into the 21st Century. These leading organisations in their respective fields of law, health and community services all back the proposal currently before Parliament, and are calling on all SA MPs to support this Bill without amendment.”

“This is not a complex issue. Abortion is healthcare and now is the time for the South Australian Parliament to be on the right side of history and ensure that abortion is treated accordingly. This is about better health outcomes for patients. This is about respecting people as competent decision-makers over our bodies and lives. This is about respecting our right to choose our own futures, and is reform that should be supported by the South Australian Parliament,” said Monique Hurley, Senior Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre.

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