



CHILDREN BY CHOICE
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NEWS RELEASE

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'ABORTION IN QUEENSLAND' FORUM TACKLES THE HARD QUESTIONS

The current state of abortion service accessibility will be addressed at a forum to be convened by Children by Choice, Family Planning Queensland and James Cook University tomorrow.

While 85% of Australians regard abortion as a woman's right, it remains in the Criminal Code in Queensland. 1 in 4 Queensland women will experience abortion but there remains considerable misunderstanding about its legal status, availability and safety.

Cait Calcutt, coordinator of Children by Choice, followed the law reform developments in Victoria with keen interest and is hoping the interstate legislative changes will act as a springboard for similar changes in Queensland.

"There is much confusion surrounding abortion in Queensland, mainly caused by the ambiguous laws governing it," Ms Calcutt said.

"This leads to poor service provision, lack of priority on health agendas and inequitable service delivery for women who are geographically isolated or financially restricted,

The laws governing abortion were enacted over 100 years ago, what is needed is for legislation to reflect current community attitudes and secure the availability of services to all Queensland women into the future," Ms Calcutt said.

Dr Caroline Harvey, FPQ Medical Director, agrees.

"Abortion access needs to be addressed as part of a broader sexual and reproductive health strategy," Dr Harvey said.

The forum will examine the legal issues, policy and practice relating to the provision and experience of abortion in Queensland today including the emergence of medical abortion options.

Dr Caroline de Costa, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, James Cook University School of Medicine in Cairns who will present at the forum is one of the few doctors in the country permitted to prescribe 'abortion pill' RU486 (Mifepristone).

"Medical abortions have been proven the world over as safe and effective, it could become a real and accessible option for women in Queensland rural and regional areas," Dr de Costa said.

A range of prominent international, Australian and Queensland speakers will address the forum. Participants will include gynaecologists, nurses, health policy advisors and academics.

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**For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:
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