



MEDIA RELEASE

Immediate Release

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Doctors and nurses risk prosecution

Today, Queensland doctors and nurses risk prosecution under the Criminal Code if they perform an abortion.

The Cairns case to be tried on 12 October charges a young couple with illegally seeking an abortion and puts a spotlight on Queensland's archaic Criminal Code, dating from 1899. If found guilty, the couple could face up to 7 years in prison.

But what many people don't realise is it is not just those *seeking* an abortion who can be found at fault: doctors and nurses are equally at risk of being charged with *providing* an unlawful abortion. Why? Because abortion is not uniformly legal in Queensland; it is only available under narrow and specific circumstances, and is generally unavailable in public hospitals altogether. These narrow circumstances do *not* include when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or to address diagnosed fetal abnormalities.

This stands in stark contrast to the fact that the Australian public -- and Queenslanders in particular -- alongside doctors, believe that the law should be changed so that abortion is no longer a crime. ¹

Access to abortion is in fact supported by a wide sector of the Australian population, across gender, religion, voting preferences and general practitioners.

GPs and nurses lack confidence and clarity in Queensland abortion laws, inhibiting their ability to deliver the best quality care to address women's individual needs. To protect women and the doctors and nurses who care for them, we must remove surgical and medication abortion from the Queensland criminal code.

Politicians must respond to both public and expert opinion by decriminalising abortion in Queensland, once and for all.

For further information or comment, please contact Janelle Weissman, Director of Communications & Development on 07 3250 0222 or 0423 408 830.

www.fpq.com.au

Sexual and reproductive health for all.

¹ de Costa CM, Russell DB, Carrette M. (2010) Views and practices of induced abortion among Australian Fellows and specialist trainees of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, *Medical Journal of Australia*, 193(1):13-6.

And

de Crespigny LJ, Wilkinson DJ, Douglas T, Textor M, Savulescu J. (2010) Australian attitudes to early and late abortion, *Medical Journal of Australia*, 193(1):9-12.