

Position Statement

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Decriminalisation of Abortion in Queensland

Today, abortion remains an offence under sections of Queensland's Criminal code, in laws enacted over 100 years ago.

While abortions are permitted under medical supervision, sections of the Criminal Code remain subject to judicial interpretation as to the meaning of 'lawful'. This ambiguity means that health professionals and women are open to the risk of prosecution.

It has also resulted in this important area of women's health receiving little attention in health policy development and the lack of reliable well planned delivery of services.

This situation continues to have a significant impact on women's lives, particularly those living in regional, rural and remote areas. These women face an unacceptable and inequitable financial burden if they choose to access services that are concentrated in south east Queensland.

A further consequence of the current situation is the limited training of medical practitioners to provide a quality service

FPQ recommends that abortion be 'decriminalised'. This would mean that **it would be necessary to repeal (i.e. remove) sections 224, 225 and 226 of the Criminal Code 1899 (Qld), as recommended in March 2000 by the Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code.**

Abortion would then be regulated in the same way as other medical procedures. Doctors and allied health staff providing this service would be accountable for safe and competent practice through legislation and regulations already in place. Abortion would be lawful if undertaken with the consent of the woman and by a medical practitioner.

FPQ believes the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code will increase the access, affordability and equity in the provision of reproductive health services for women living in Queensland.

Accessibility to safe and affordable abortion services ensures the rights of women to reproductive self determination.

Also see FPQ's Position Statement 'Abortion'. ■