

AASW commends decriminalisation of abortion in Queensland

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) commends the historic decriminalisation of abortion in Queensland. Social work is founded on the principles of social justice, human rights and professional integrity. Women's access to reproductive health services, including abortion, cannot be separated from fundamental human rights and social justice. AASW Queensland Branch President Dr Fotina Hardy said, "Queensland's passing of the Termination of Pregnancy Bill marks an important step forward in protecting a woman's right over her reproductive health. "We cannot however, become complacent. Now is the time to make sure that abortion services are accessible to women across Queensland. We know rural and remote Queensland women have more difficulty and greater expense in accessing terminations. Therapeutic support services should also be available for women before and after a termination of pregnancy, should they choose to access them. "The decriminalisation of abortion in Queensland has been a long time coming and is a huge victory for human rights and gender equity." Criminalisation of abortion in Queensland meant that women were denied appropriate access to their reproductive rights. In particular, it disadvantaged women experiencing poverty and homelessness, young women, women dealing with family violence, women with a disability, sexual assault survivors, women in rural and remote locations and women from non-English speaking backgrounds. AASW National President Christine Craik said, "These are the very people and issues that social workers work with, day in, day out. The criminalisation of abortion in Queensland was an added burden for women who were already dealing with family violence and sexual abuse or other challenging circumstances. There is a strong link between family violence, unplanned pregnancy and the ability to access contraception and termination. Marie Stopes Australia's white paper published recently shows that reproductive coercion plays a larger role in family violence tactics than previously thought. There is no doubt that the criminalisation of abortion worked against women. "The new Queensland legislation puts abortion where it should properly be – in a separate Act that deals with it as a health issue. Making terminations accessible for women where and when they need it, particularly in the less populated areas of Australia is another issue governments need to address, but this was certainly a welcome step." Christine Craik is available for interview. You can read the AASW Queensland Branch's letter [here](#).

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