



SPHERE Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Coalition

Comment in relation to the proposed NSW Abortion Law Reform Amendment (Health Care Access) Bill 2025

SPHERE is the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care. SPHERE is a collaborative research centre comprising national and international experts in sexual and reproductive health.

The SPHERE Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Coalition is a cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary alliance comprising over 150 clinician experts and consumers, representatives from peak bodies and key stakeholder organisations and eminent Australian and international researchers with a shared vision for improving women's sexual and reproductive health.

SPHERE Coalition recommendations relating to abortion care nationally:

Since its inception, the SPHERE Coalition has developed a series of consensus statements related to abortion, including a statement on [achieving equitable access to abortion care in regional, rural and remote Australia](#) and on [publicly funded abortion service provision: a duty of care](#). The recommendations relevant to the Abortion Law Reform Amendment (Health Care Access) Bill 2025, are listed below:

- That publicly funded abortion services are accessible, affordable and available
- That abortion services are recognised by both federal and state governments as an essential health care service requiring Category 1 status.
- That where complications arise in the provision of abortion services in community settings, accessible and equitable treatment is available in publicly funded hospital services
- That services which receive public funding or engage in training future health professionals are mandated to provide medical and surgical abortion services to ensure the needs of their local health district are met
- That state-wide information and referral centres are available for all women requesting an abortion which includes a choice of medical and surgical abortion as appropriate
- That as part of the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 the Minister of Health reports on the proportion, location and names of services that are engaged in publicly funded abortion services

The proposed NSW legislation

Five years ago, the Abortion Law Reform Act 2019 was passed in New South Wales, decriminalising abortion. In the years since, access to abortion has remained challenging and many women still face barriers including high out-of-pocket costs, a lack of local services, stigma, long wait times, conscientious objection, and lack of access to unbiased information regarding abortion care (1, 2, 3).



In 2024, [Australian media reported on cases of NSW public hospitals refusing to provide abortion services](#). This revealed a more widespread and systemic issue, with University of Sydney research finding [just three of NSW's 220 public hospitals are routinely providing abortions](#). Conscientious objection due to personal beliefs or perceived stigma, and insufficient numbers of health practitioners trained in abortion care are leading factors (4).

In 2024, the NSW Government commenced reviews of the effectiveness of the Abortion Law Reform Act 2019 and current service provision in NSW.

In February 2025, NSW Greens MP, Dr Amanda Cohn, introduced the [Abortion Law Reform Amendment \(Health Care Access\) Bill 2025](#) in the NSW parliament and it is currently under consideration.

SPHERE supports initiatives to improve access to abortion care in line with the SPHERE recommendations listed above (5). In addition, consideration should be given to the harmonisation and alignment of legislation and regulations across states and territories. The historical non-alignment and differences between legislation in various states and territories has caused serious confusion and concern to consumers and health professionals. Abortion is an essential part of our health system and women should be able to access timely care wherever they live.

References

1. Doran and Hornibrook., 2016. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26987999/>
2. Hulme-Chambers et al., 2018. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29389497/>
3. Mazza et al., 2020. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32464732/>
4. Noonan, A et al. 2024. "Imagine if we had an actual service...": A qualitative exploration of abortion access challenges in Australian rural primary care. *Rural and Remote Health*, 24(4), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH9229>
5. SPHERE Coalition., 2020. https://www.spherecre.org/images/A_consensus_statement_on_publicly_funded_abortion_service_provision_a_duty_of_care.pdf

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