Abortion Law Reform
Do we focus too much on the issue and not enough on the politics?

Jenny Ejlak, August 2017
@ReproChoiceAu  #UPAA2017
www.reproductivechoiceaustralia.org.au
Background: Reproductive Choice Australia

Formed in 2005 as a national coalition of pro-choice organisations and individuals.

Founding members included:

- SH&FPA
- PHAA
- AWHN
- Children by Choice (Qld)
- WEL
- NFAW
- YWCA
- NUS
- ARHA
- Pregnancy Advisory Service, The Women’s (VIC)
- Pregnancy Advisory Centre (SA)
- Women’s Equality Think Tank
- F Collective (Sydney)
- State based abortion law reform alliances
- And many individuals
Established partly to campaign to remove the ministerial veto over RU486

*Therapeutic Goods Amendment Act 2006*
Next campaign: national law for truth in advertising for pregnancy counselling

Another cross-party effort also involving GetUp! and another petition.

Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2006.
Reproductive Choice Australia Planning Day 2007

Plan
- Support state and territory based law-reform campaigns but not be seen to lead them
- Continue to work at national level and support state level work on other aspects of accessibility and affordability of abortion
- Continue to build on networks to strengthen abortion sector

Reality
Vic 2007-08
QLD 2009/10
criminal trial
Tas 2010-13
Also...

- QLD, NT and NSW campaigns
- Guy Barnett & John Madigan – attempts to restrict Medicare rebates for abortion
- Threats to Abortion Law Reform Act 2008 Vic
- Pre-election campaigns
- Resources: Guidelines on reporting on Abortion, Abortion Law Reform: key points for advocates, Australian Abortion Law Infographic Map
- Leslie Cannold TEDx Talk 2012, Women Deliver 2016
- Anti-stigma campaign incl flashmobs
- Various opinion pieces and quotes for media articles
- Personhood laws: Zoe’s Law x 3 NSW, Jayden’s Law SA, Sophie’s Law QLD
- Access Zones: ACT, VIC
- TGA and PBS submissions, mifepristone, EC
- Social Media reach Facebook: 1395  Twitter: 1069
- Member of Equality Rights Alliance
- Advocate for a National Reproductive Health Strategy
Resources
We are a volunteer run, unfunded organisation, and we need you

Active Members & Volunteers
Join us!

Funding
http://www.nfaw.org/donate
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## Abortion Law: Evidence vs Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence for Abortion being treated the same way as all other healthcare</th>
<th>Evidence for Abortion being criminalised or otherwise restricted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Nations</td>
<td>Opinions are not facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Australasian &amp; New Zealand College of Obstetricians &amp; Gynaecologists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Health Association of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victorian Law Reform Commission</td>
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<td>International Planned Parenthood Foundation</td>
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<td>Guttmacher Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Health and Medical Research Council</td>
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So why do our laws look like this?
Key Message (in a blinding flash of the obvious)

Having the numbers in parliament is key to any legislative reform.

A wide range of political factors can affect the chances of reform.
Politics

- Victoria – a tale of three governments
- Tasmania – take a complaint to police and wait 12 years
- Northern Territory – what a different an election makes
- QLD, NSW

If the Victorian Coalition Government supported the passing of a new law that made it harder for women to access abortion in Victoria, would you be more likely to vote for them, less likely to vote for them or would it make no difference to the way you would vote?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Voting Intention</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More likely</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less likely</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>refused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More pro-choice MPs = better abortion laws

But how?

Some things we’ve tried:

- Pre-election surveys of candidates by electorate.
- Specific or general questions depending on the issues of the time
- Stand alone survey or one general question in a social issues survey (joint work with Fair Agenda)
Strategies

We need to educate other like-minded progressive groups, get them thinking about abortion access as a social justice / human rights issue and to make it part of their platform so they advocate for women’s reproductive rights.

Work with these organisations to promote socially progressive candidates for election in all parties.
Do we focus too much on the issue and not enough on the politics?

We should always provide strong evidence bases for our arguments – but this is not enough.

We need to work with other groups to strengthen and broaden the scope of our lobbying.

Remember that the law is only one of many issues that affect access to abortion – law reform is only the first step.
The Future