

MEDIA RELEASE

CHILDREN BY CHOICE CALLS FOR SAFE ACCESS ZONES IN ALL JURISDICTIONS NOW.

Each year, clinics who provide termination of pregnancy services face 40 days of staff and patient harassment by religiously affiliated groups for Lent. While some states and territories have legislated safe access zones of 150m around clinics, there is still harassment from anti-choice individuals allowed in Western Australia and South Australia.

While Children by Choice supports the right to individual belief and expression, it is our experience that anti-choice protests near clinics that perform termination of pregnancy services can have a detrimental effect on patients, support people, and employees of the clinic.

Daile Kelleher, Manager of Children by Choice commented: "These groups often claim they are 'counselling' women. However, research shows that the majority of women experiencing unplanned pregnancy say they have no need or wish to speak to a counsellor. If a pregnant person does request counselling, they should be referred to an unbiased professionally qualified counsellor in a safe and confidential environment, not by anti-abortion protesters on a public footpath."

"In the past some women that come to us for post-abortion counselling sight interactions with anti-choicers outside clinics as a reason for requiring further support. This was heightened for our Queensland based service during the abortion law reform campaign in 2018 where we saw many more groups standing outside clinics that perform termination of pregnancy services harassing staff, patients and support people. This got so bad outside some Brisbane clinics an advocacy group Pro Choice Queensland had to run a clinic defender program, where volunteers would offer their time to shield patients from anti-choice harassers as they walked into the building." Said Kelleher.

In Queensland, we have legislation preventing these groups from being within 150 metres of a clinic that performs termination of pregnancy services. We stand in solidarity with Western Australia and South Australia who do not yet have safe access zones in place. We call on the State Governments to implement these laws and support women and pregnant people to access basic health care without enduring harassment in their own state.

Children by Choice is an independent Brisbane-based non-profit organisation, committed to providing unbiased information, counselling and referrals for all unplanned pregnancy options – abortion, adoption and parenting. We also provide sexuality education to young people and professional development training for health and community sector professionals. Founded almost 50 years ago, we work to advance Queenslanders' reproductive choices, and to improve access to safe and legal abortion.

Daile Kelleher is available for media comment: 07 3357 9933