

Advocates welcome Senate Inquiry's recommendations to improve abortion access in the future; remain concerned about gaps for patients facing immediate access barriers.

Leading reproductive healthcare advocates have welcomed a cross-party Senate Inquiry report recommending action to address barriers to abortion access, saying the list of recommendations provides a good starting point for the Albanese Government to advance reform.

Fair Agenda, Australian Women's Health Network, Children By Choice and MSI Australia have jointly called for action to address five key barriers to abortion access around the country:

1. affordability,
2. lack of clinical services;
3. inadequate healthcare workforce,
4. overregulation of medication; and
5. a lack of sufficient data to inform policy.

The groups celebrated the Inquiry's recommendations that the Government advance and consider changes related to all of these five areas; and **called on the Government to make a commitment to concrete changes in relation to all of the abortion access recommendations.**

The advocates expressed their joint concern at the Inquiry's failure to recommend a national fund or other immediate action to address dire affordability barriers hurting patients right now. The groups say it makes it all the more urgent for the Government to begin moving forward the system changes recommended.

"We have patients calling our service every single day who desperately need financial support to access abortion care. These are people who can't rely on their local public hospital, and who don't have access to the hundreds of dollars they face in out of pocket costs. You shouldn't have to start a go fund me to access an abortion. Someone who is struggling to put food on the table should be able to rely on Medicare for this critical healthcare." says Daile Kelleher, Children by Choice.

"These recommendations are a decent next step; but they won't change anything for patients seeking abortion care for at least another year. Barriers to abortion access aren't a future problem, they're a problem for people in crisis right now. In the budget earlier this month the Treasurer spoke about the importance of your credit card not determining your access to quality healthcare. But right now that is the reality for many people who are blocked from accessing

abortion because they can't rely on Medicare to cover key costs." added Bonney Corbin, Head of Policy and Research at MSI Australia.

The groups drew particular attention to the need for Government to make concrete commitments to timely delivery of the recommendations to:

- Ensure all public hospitals be equipped to provide surgical pregnancy terminations, or timely and affordable pathways to other local providers (Rec #15)
- Establish a national telephone information and referral service for reproductive health services like 1800 MY OPTIONS (Rec #17)
- Review Medicare support available for medical abortion care (Rec #18), including for nurse-led care.

"This Inquiry has highlighted a number of problems: with existing Medicare arrangements, with many public hospitals not including abortion care in the services they provide, and with patients who face barriers to even finding out where they can find a health service who provides abortion care. We need the Albanese Government to commit to strong action to address these problems, urgently." said Renee Carr, Executive Director at Fair Agenda.

"This report is called Ending the Postcode Lottery, but without funding to implement these changes, we know that people will have to continue to travel across borders and face exorbitant costs to access essential healthcare. Women and gender diverse people across Australia need local access to health services now." said Dr Romy Listo, Deputy Chair at Australian Women's Health Network.

"The report failed to highlight the importance of harmonising our laws. Which side of a state line you live on shouldn't impact your ability to access healthcare. We encourage the government to also ensure nation-wide cohesion when it comes to reforms like nurse-led abortion care." she added.

The groups noted their appreciation for the work of the Committee members, in putting together the report, and welcomed the cross-party endorsement of the recommendations.

"It's fantastic to see that, like across our communities, Committee members from across different parties support addressing barriers to accessing reproductive healthcare - including abortion care." Ms Carr added.

The groups concluded: We're encouraged by the ALP Committee members' support of these recommendations, and hope that Health Minister Butler and Assistant Health Minister Kearney will announce concrete commitments, and resourcing to enable these changes, as soon as possible.

—ENDS —

Media contact: Renee Carr, Fair Agenda, 0435 597 976

Available for comment:

- Renee Carr, 0435 597 976
- Bonney Corbin, 0419 401 809
- Daile Kelleher, Children By Choice, 0409 625 189
- Romy Listo, 0437225035

The Senate's Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry Report "[Ending the postcode lottery: Addressing Barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia](#)" is [available here](#).

The group's Joint Submission to the Inquiry: [Achieving equal Access: Abortion Care in Australia is available here](#).