

ABORTION — LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**736. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's announcement that it will be modernising legislation governing abortion care in Western Australia. Can the minister outline to the house why laws regarding abortion care need to be updated, including the full decriminalisation of abortion, and can the minister advise the house how women and other stakeholders can provide input into the proposed legislative changes?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

I thank the member for her question.

Labor has a proud track record of ensuring that women can access legal and safe abortion care in Western Australia. Many members will know that in 1998, Labor member Cheryl Davenport introduced a private member's bill from opposition in the Legislative Council. At that time, it was nation-leading reform, but concessions were made as part of that bill. It was a tight vote and a conscience vote, as was appropriate, and therefore concessions were made. We now have 25 years' worth of data and evidence to show us that although the legislation was nation leading for a long time, it has created unnecessary hurdles for women. Since then, we have seen other jurisdictions catch up very recently and introduce their own frameworks to provide legal access to terminations. Many women under the current framework have had to travel interstate to access the care they need, despite it being based on best medical advice. The legal framework is challenging to navigate. In addition, the obligations and, in some cases, the reporting that is required for practitioners are also challenging and unclear under the legal framework, particularly for later gestational terminations.

I am pleased to announce that on Sunday we opened up four weeks of consultation on reforming the legislation. We are seeking to introduce legislation early next year that will fully decriminalise and streamline access to care. We want to review a number of requirements, including the GP referral and counselling requirements, the upper gestational limit of 20 weeks and the role of the ministerial panel after 20 weeks. We want to hear from women who have accessed abortions, from practitioners and healthcare workers who support women with abortion care, and other interested stakeholders. The aim of the law will be to safeguard the future of abortion care and ensure the dignity, privacy and safety of patients, and provide clarity for practitioners as they navigate those services. To be clear, abortion in Western Australia is legal, and has been since 1998. We are not consulting on whether it should be legal. It is legal, full stop. We are consulting on how we can provide access to this legal healthcare option for women in Western Australia. To date, we have already had 7 000 responses. That is fantastic and I encourage people to have their say.