

## Environment and Public Affairs Committee

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**Subject:** Petition No. 061 – Abortion rights in Western Australia

**From:** Nicole Mcewen

**Sent:** Thursday, 15 September 2022 10:53 PM

**To:** Environment and Public Affairs Committee <env@parliament.wa.gov.au>

**Subject:** Re: Petition No. 061 – Abortion rights in Western Australia

Hi,

Please find the submission below

Abortion is healthcare, and as such it is a basic right that should be available to all women and pregnant people, regardless of their age, their postcode, or their income. It is a disgrace that across the world, including here in WA, this right is severely restricted.

After the US Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v Wade, thousands of people protested across Australia to decry women's oppression and to demand that abortion rights be expanded here. Thousands also signed the e-petition to demand reform. This issue goes to the heart of women's rights everywhere. We deserve the right to decide if and when we will have children, and to determine the fate of our own lives and bodies.

Western Australia has the strictest abortion laws in the country. Minister Amber Jade Sanderson admitted that the restrictive WA laws mean women often are forced to fly interstate to access abortion after 15 weeks. The law should be immediately changed so that abortion is regulated via health legislation, not the criminal code. All requirements for more than one doctor to approve the procedure should be removed. Training should be provided to ensure doctors can safely perform abortions in any suitable GP office or hospital, regardless of the religious affiliations of the institution. The only determining factor for whether someone terminates a pregnancy should be their personal choice to do so.

However, even if the law was perfect, many people would still be unable to access abortions due to cost and accessibility issues. Across Australia, but especially in WA, the abortion access is restricted; it is disproportionately poor and working class women who are impacted, particularly those in regional areas.

Marie Stopes (MSI), the largest abortion provider based in WA, is a private non-profit clinic. MSI Australia Managing Director Jamal Hakim told a reporter that to "end the postcode lottery, we need to harmonise state and territory legislation alongside investing in universal abortion access and embed abortion care in the healthcare system."

The minimum cost for a surgical abortion through them is \$650 for those with a low income health care card. A medical abortion via phone is \$400, not including the price of the medication itself, which costs between \$30 and \$75 depending on your provider and whether you have a health care card. Those without access to medicare face costs in the thousands. Women and pregnant people in WA should not have to rely on private charities for their healthcare.

There are only 3 pregnancy termination clinics in WA, located in Midland, Rivervale, and Dunsborough. As medical abortions can only be safely performed up to 9 weeks, this is extremely limiting. The cost of booking time off work, travel, accommodation, on top of the exorbitant cost for the procedure itself, is an unacceptable barrier.

Pro-choice activists and advocates across WA submit that abortion services must be immediately expanded and fully funded.

For further information, see:

<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/postcode-lottery-womens-access-to-abortion-in-australia-under-fire/news-story/61f2bb5fd7eed2a69cb257f4e2da0f5b>

<https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/abortion-reform-on-mcgowan-s-agenda-as-student-demands-to-know-why-they-aren-t-free-20220810-p5b8ti.html>

<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/accessing-an-abortion-in-regional-australia/101101100>

<https://www.mariestopes.org.au/abortion/home-abortion/>