



Women's Health Victoria

healthy empowered equal

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MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate distribution

Safe access to health services for women

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The right to safely access health services and to medical privacy is taken for granted by most Victorians. However, this has not been the experience of women who have for years been forced to contend with harassment and obstruction when accessing some reproductive health services.

We all value medical privacy as it means we can seek confidential advice from health professionals to make informed decisions without the judgement of others. This includes the right of women to safely and confidentially access these services.

Despite patients legislated right to safe and confidential health care, women attending some reproductive health clinics in Melbourne are subjected to threats, intimidation and bullying from anti-choice protesters who have become a permanent fixture outside. This violation of patient rights and confidentiality would be unthinkable in relation to other areas of health.

Anti-choice protesters deliberately cause trauma and distress to patients, as well as to the health professionals employed there.

Freedom of speech means that anti-choice protesters have the right to protest, however they do not have the right to harass or obstruct women from exercising their legal right to medical services and to privacy. Protesting should be done at a distance from health services so that it does not intimidate or harass patients.

“Women’s Health Victoria supported Abortion Law Reform in 2008, ensuring that women have the right to a safe and legal abortion service. We now need to ensure that this is available without intimidation” said Rita Butera, Women’s Health Victoria Executive Director.

As a community we have allowed this to go on for too long. It is time to take the next step and ensure that women accessing reproductive health services in Victoria do so without obstruction or violation of their medical privacy.

For media enquiries and interviews, please contact:

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About Women's Health Victoria

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, state-wide women's health promotion, information and advocacy service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV works collaboratively with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women.

WHV's work is underpinned by a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants.

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