



MEDIA RELEASE

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Women's Health Victoria welcomes expansion of midwife prescribing powers for medication abortion

MELBOURNE – Monday 2 September 2024

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) welcomes yesterday's announcement by the Minister for Health to expand the range of medicines that midwives can prescribe, including for medication abortion. This significant change marks a crucial step forward to improve access to reproductive healthcare across Victoria, particularly in regions where access to services is limited.

Access to medication abortion in Victoria has been severely constrained by the shortage of trained practitioners, particularly in rural and regional areas. Sally Hasler, CEO of Women's Health Victoria, says, "access issues continue to persist, limiting the options available to pregnant people in need of timely and safe abortion care. The decision to allow midwives to prescribe medication for abortion acknowledges their vital role within the abortion care workforce."

The 1800 My Options service, delivered by Women's Health Victoria, provides information to abortion seekers and continues to hear from people facing delays in care due to the lack of suitably trained practitioners. These delays are particularly felt by those living in regional and rural areas, or who face other access barriers such as an inability to afford care or access culturally safe services. Manager of 1800 My Options Carolyn Mogharbel, explains "delays in care can lead to pregnant people being forced to have surgical abortions, which are more costly and often require significant travel. Ensuring that pregnant people can choose the type of abortion they want, from a provider close to home, upholds reproductive freedom and midwives are an excellent workforce to support these choices."

As Sally Hasler explains, "Midwifery care is both accessible to and trusted by many pregnant people. By allowing midwives to fully utilise their skills and training in abortion care, this

change ensures that person-centred care remains at the forefront of reproductive health services. Endorsed midwives, with their comprehensive understanding of patient needs, will now be better equipped to support pregnant people through the entirety of their care journey.”

This change is aligned with the recommendations from the federal Senate Inquiry into universal access to reproductive healthcare in May 2023, which called for expanded roles for healthcare professionals in abortion care and with 2023 reforms by the Therapeutic Goods Administration allowing Nurse Practitioners to prescribe medication abortions.

While this advancement is a significant step forward for abortion access in Victoria, it is crucial that all recommendations from the Senate Inquiry are implemented. Women's Health Victoria remains committed to advocating for equitable access to reproductive healthcare across the state and will continue to support measures that enhance the capacity of healthcare professionals to provide essential services.

Quotes attributable to:

- **Sally Hasler, CEO of Women's Health Victoria**
- **Carolyn Mogharbel, Manager of 1800 My Options**

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About Women's Health Victoria

Women's Health Victoria is a statewide, feminist, non-profit organisation working with government, the health sector, and the community to improve health outcomes for women (cis and trans inclusive) and gender diverse people. We advocate for healthcare rights and access, deliver health promotion resources, and operate vital information and support services, so that all Victorians have the opportunity to access optimal health and wellbeing, free from bias and discrimination.

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