

SAS Position Statement on Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare.

The Society of Australian Sexologists Ltd. (SAS) supports the rights of all Australians to access free, legal and compassionate reproductive healthcare, and supports the removal of barriers to access. Including for people who live in rural and remote areas, First Nations peoples, migrants and refugees including people on temporary visas, LGBTIQA+ people, people with a disability, sex workers and those who are incarcerated.

SAS is Australia's leading peak body for the regulation and accreditation of psychosexual therapists and sexuality educators with the vision of positive integration and enhancement of sexuality into people's lives, including the promotion of sexual rights for all.

We advocate for the removal of structural barriers that prevent access to reproductive healthcare for all, so no matter who you are, or where you live, all are provided with fair and equitable care.

Current Challenges:

- Currently in Australia, each State and Territory has different legislation regarding abortion care.
- Abortion healthcare is not funded by Medicare, in some places people seeking an abortion pay up to \$550 and in other areas there are no out of pocket expenses.
- In some parts of Australia, people seeking a medical abortion cannot access this service, because there are no GPs and / or pharmacists who can prescribe.
- Medicare is currently only available to Australian residents and citizens, and New Zealand citizens living in Australia who have applied for residency. This is a barrier to universal access as many people live in Australia for years before they receive residency status.
- Sex education is mandated in Australian schools, but there are no national mandates within the Australian curriculum regarding sex and relationship education, and inclusive education is not mandated. There are no professional standards for teaching Sex and Relationship Education.

Sexual Rights as Human Rights:

The Declaration of Sexual Rights (2014) states that sexual rights are grounded in universal human rights, that are recognised in International and regional human rights documents. Particularly related to Reproductive healthcare are the following human rights pertaining to sexuality.

- The right to equality and non-discrimination. (1)
- The right to life, liberty and security of the person. (2)
- The right to autonomy and bodily integrity. (3)

The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual health. (7)

The right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application. (8)
The right to information. (9)
The right to education and the right to comprehensive sexuality education. (10)
The right to decide whether to have children, the number and spacing of children, and to have the information and the means to do so. (12)

SAS is in support of the following measures and recommendations, to ensure universal access to reproductive healthcare;

Abortion laws across Australia should be harmonised to create a level playing field and transparency for clinicians and consumers of health care.

Abortion as part of the public health system so that equal access to affordable or free contraceptives and abortion care is available to all Australians, across all jurisdictions.

Medical or Surgical abortion availability for all indications, without the need for counselling, or justification provided.

A commitment to having GPs trained to prescribe medical abortion pills, and prescribing Pharmacists in all regions, and telehealth services (with medication via mail) available in places that do not have the above services.

Medical Abortion pills covered under the PBS at the cost of \$42.50
<https://www.pbs.gov.au/medicine/item/10211K>

Telehealth services providing early termination of pregnancy care, funded by the Australian Government under Medicare.

Allow just one health practitioner to be involved to be able to access abortion healthcare, in all regions (excludes late abortions). Gestational age at which additional requirements to apply from 24-weeks gestation in all jurisdictions.

Reproductive health leave as a paid leave entitlement for employees to balance reproductive needs, sexual health and wellbeing. For example menstruation and abortion care are not illnesses, and having reproductive leave as separate, on top of sick pay will reduce the gender pay-gap.

Comprehensive relationship and sex education to all students in Australian public schools as part of the mandated curriculum, with professional standards and training for teaching these classes.

Concluding comments:

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Existing models of Abortion care can be seen in the Northern Territory and South Australia. Standardised, free access to safe abortion care is necessary for all people who want/need to use abortion services in Australia. As is appropriate, professional guidelines and training, assurance of abortion medication access through pharmacies, a trained and willing workforce, and better comprehensive school relationship and sexuality education.

SAS reaffirms that all people should have access to safe abortion services and we recognise and acknowledge the inherent freedom, dignity, equity, and non-discrimination of all human beings and are committed to protection from harm.

References:

https://worldsexualhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/declaration_of_sexual_rights_sep03_2014_b.pdf

https://worldsexualhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/statement_abortion_usa.pdf