

28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## **Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion (Safe Areas) Amendment Bill**

New Zealand College of Midwives

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The New Zealand College of Midwives is the professional organisation for midwifery. Our members are employed and self-employed and collectively represent over 90% of the practising midwives in this country. There are approximately 3,000 midwives who hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). These midwives provide maternity care to, on average, 60,000 women and babies each year. New Zealand has a unique and efficient maternity service model which centres care around the needs of the woman and her baby.

Midwives undertake a four-year equivalent undergraduate degree to become registered followed by a first year of practice program that includes full mentoring by senior midwives. The undergraduate curriculum meets all international regulatory and education standards. Midwives are authorised prescribers in relation to their Scope of Practice as determined by the Midwifery Council.

Midwives provide an accessible and primary health care service for women in the community within a continuity of carer model as Lead Maternity Carers. Midwives can also choose to work within secondary and tertiary maternity facilities, providing essential care to women with complex maternity needs.

The College offers information, education and advice to women, midwives, district health boards, health and social service agencies and the Ministry of Health regarding midwifery and maternity issues. Midwives interface with a multitude of other health professionals and agencies to support women to achieve the optimum outcome for their pregnancies, health and wellbeing

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New Zealand  
**College of Midwives**  
TE KĀRETI O NGA KAIWHAKAWHANAU KI AOTEAROA

28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

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## **Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion (Safe Areas) Amendment Bill**

Tēnā koutou

The New Zealand College of Midwives (the College) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion (Safe Areas) Amendment Bill. Midwifery care takes place in partnership with women, and underpinning this practice philosophy is a concern for women's health, sexuality, reproduction, autonomy, and empowerment. Midwives respect and uphold women's rights to make fully informed decisions about their pregnancies, birth and parenthood, and this includes decisions about continuation or discontinuation of a pregnancy, or pregnancies.

The College recognised the Abortion Legislation Bill as a signifier of significant progress towards reproductive justice and the elimination of discrimination against women in Aotearoa New Zealand. We also recognise the importance of this amendment to the Bill aimed at stopping the harassment directed at those accessing an essential health service.

Our feedback is below -

1. The College previously expressed a concern about women, abortion services and care providers, in a climate that can embolden hate activity, in our submission on the Abortion Bill.
2. The College supports the proposed amendments aimed at protecting the rights of those accessing abortions to safety, privacy and dignity. It is distressing for women, who have had to make difficult decisions about their pregnancies and who will already be experiencing a range of emotions including grief, to be exposed to very public and targeted harassment.

3. The College also supports the inclusion of those providing or assisting with abortion services, those seeking advice or information about abortion services, and those providing or assisting with providing advice or information about abortion services within the protected person category.
4. The College supports the setting up of safe areas around specific abortion facilities but recommends that the safe area should be extended to include spaces that are visible to women accessing abortion services. We do not consider it appropriate that placards held by protesters can be seen by women accessing health care. Therefore, 150 metres may not meet the criteria for ensuring safety in all locations. For example, Hagley Park, which is across the road from Christchurch Hospital, is used as a venue for protest and is very visible to people accessing health services, and to women in the birthing suite and maternity ward, despite being more than 150m from the hospital entrance.
5. While the College welcomes safe areas being set up around clinics we also consider that if all abortion services were situated in generic health service locations, it could resolve potential conflict situations and better protect women and others involved with abortion services.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the consultation process.

Ngā mihi

Carol Bartle

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New Zealand College of Midwives

Te Kāreti O Nga Kaiwhakawhanau Ki Aotearoa