

# Media Release



**The Hon Jill Hennessy MP**  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services

Thursday, 26 November, 2015

## **SAFE ACCESS ZONES TO PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHT TO MEDICAL PRIVACY AND DIGNITY**

Victorian women will now be able to access lawful medical services free from harassment and intimidation following the passage of legislation to establish safe access zones around abortion providers.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Safe Access Zone) Bill 2015 today formally passed the Victorian Legislative Council without amendment.

The Bill supports women's reproductive health choices by ensuring that all women can access health services that provide abortions without fear, intimidation, harassment or obstruction.

It will see a 150 metre zone established around hospitals, GP clinics and health services that perform abortions, where it will be an offence to engage in behaviour that harasses or intimidates women seeking to access an abortion.

The legislation will protect the rights of women to medical privacy by making it illegal to film people without consent within the safe access zone, or for anyone to impede access to a footpath, road or vehicle without a reasonable excuse within the zone.

For too long, women accessing abortion services have been subject to verbal and psychological abuse designed to discourage them from accessing these services.

Staff who work at places where abortions are performed also have the right to enter and leave their workplace safely, without being obstructed, interfered with, hindered or harassed.

The Andrews Labor Government believes the Bill strikes the appropriate balance between the rights of an individual to protest, and the rights of women to medical privacy and dignity.

The Bill follows similar laws passed in Tasmania in 2013 to establish 150 metre safe access zones around abortion providers. Similar zones exist in Canada and various states across the United States.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy**

*"Women have a right to medical privacy and the right to access a legal health service without experiencing harassment and intimidation."*

*"The establishment of safe access zones will ensure women can safely and confidentially access abortion services without being subject to verbal and psychological abuse."*

*"I wish to acknowledge the work of the Member for Northern Metropolitan Region, Fiona Patten, who took the initiative of developing a Private Member's Bill to address this longstanding problem."*