

27 March 2008

D-DAY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Victoria's new pro-choice coalition today called on the Victorian Government to put the rights of women and couples first when reviewing the Victorian Law Reform Commission's (VLRC) legislative advice on the decriminalisation of abortion.

Their calls came on the eve of the VLRC presenting its findings from a six-month investigation into models for reforming the law to the Attorney-General, Rob Hulls.

"I'm sure the VLRC has done a thorough job, and will offer the Government an option for reform that finally takes the decision out of the hands of doctors, bureaucrats and politicians, and puts it in the hands of women and couples," said Dr Leslie Cannold, Spokesperson for Pro Choice Vic.

"Abortion is a medical procedure with moral implications.

"The medical procedure should be regulated like all others in this State.

"The moral issues, particularly in a pluralist society like Australia, are best managed by the woman or couple.

"The decriminalisation process must remove all references to abortion and child destruction from the Crimes Act, and must not attempt to slip back the same or similar restrictions into the Health Act, or any other part of the law.

"Victorian politicians have a once in a generation opportunity to reform the law.

"We urge them to do so and to do it in a way that finally shows respect to the decision-making authority of women and couples when it comes to their own reproductive lives.

"Women, not doctors or politicians, are the experts.

"We call on the Government to make the report available to the public as soon as possible."

The Victorian Law Reform Commission is required to finish its report to parliament by 28 March 2008. The Attorney-General then has 14 sitting days of parliament to release the report. For more information on the project and terms of reference, visit www.lawreform.vic.gov.au

Pro Choice Vic is a collection of individuals and organisations formed in response to the law reform process currently underway in Victoria. The group supports the right of all women and couples to safe and legal abortion, and are committed to achieving a law reform outcome for Victorian women and couples that:

- maximises their reproductive rights and freedoms;
- fosters their dignity; and
- respects their moral agency by putting the decision in their hands.

Pro Choice Vic members include Liberty Victoria, the Doctors Reform Society of Australia, Reproductive Choice Australia, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, YWCA Victoria and sexual and reproductive healthcare providers.

For more information on Pro Choice Vic, including how to sign up to receive updates on the law reform process, visit <http://prochoicevic.org/>

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