

12 October 2010

## **ABORTION LAW REFORM OVERDUE IN QUEENSLAND**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is calling on the Queensland (QLD) State Parliament to decriminalise abortion. PHAA points out the decriminalisation of abortion in QLD would follow on from similar changes to legislation in other jurisdictions.

“This week a young couple from Cairns will face a criminal trial for attempting to have an abortion under century-old laws that classify abortion as a criminal ‘offence against morality’. If found guilty, the young woman faces up to 7 years behind bars. PHAA, along with many other public health and community organisations, believes that criminal charges are not just inappropriate but tragic. The QLD Government needs to change its laws so it can deal with what is a common women’s health issue, more appropriately,” explained Professor Helen Keleher, PHAA President.

“Decriminalisation in other Australian jurisdictions and countries has not led to an increase in abortions. Research conducted over the last few years by groups such as the Victorian Law Reform Commission and Children by Choice in QLD has consistently concluded that the decriminalisation of abortion is supported by a majority of community members.

PHAA supports abortion rights within a context of broader sexual and reproductive health with equal support for maternity and post-natal services and a strong education and prevention focus. PHAA, Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia and the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance have called on the Federal Government to develop a National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy with an emphasis on prevention of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies.

As part of this broader strategy, it is important that a range of legal, safe, accessible and affordable pregnancy termination services are available, including options for both drug-induced and surgical terminations. The decriminalisation of abortion services would ensure that the full range of options are available to QLD women, as in other jurisdictions,” said Professor Keleher.

### **For further information/comment:**

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### **Background Resources:**

Call to Action for a National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy:

[http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/SRH\\_call\\_to\\_action.pdf](http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/SRH_call_to_action.pdf)

Time for a National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy for Australia: Background Paper, February 2008:

[http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/SRH\\_background\\_paper.pdf](http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/SRH_background_paper.pdf)

A list of organisations supporting the Call to Action:

<http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/SRHStrategyCallendorseesandogos.pdf>

PHAA Policy and Fact Sheets on Abortion:

<http://www.phaa.net.au/factsheets.php>