



Diocese of Armidale

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PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (SAFE ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CLINICS) BILL 2018

Penny Sharpe MLC introduced the *Public Health Amendment (Safe Access to Reproductive Health Clinics) Bill 2018* into the Legislative Council on 17th May 2018. The bill has been co-sponsored by The Nationals MLC Trevor Khan. The following link will take you to the webpage relating to the bill <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bills/Pages/bill-details.aspx?pk=3508>.

Thursday, 24th May has been set aside for the full debate and vote on the bill in the Legislative Council. The plan as it stands is that the House will not rise on the day until the debate is concluded and it is voted on.

WHAT DOES THE BILL MEAN?

- It will create “safe zones” around abortion clinics up to 150 metres
- It will prevent street counsellors within 150 metres of an abortion clinic from reaching out to mothers considering abortion
- It will prohibit pro-life groups and individuals from praying within 150 metres of an abortion clinic – even when these groups are not attempting to talk to the people entering clinics
- It will stop people from demonstrating within 150 metres of an abortion clinic

WHAT ARE THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- It is a direct threat to freedom of religion and speech
- It places the rights of one group of people above those of others
- It prevents vulnerable women from receiving practical support from pro-life groups
- It creates a precedent for future restrictions on other peaceful protests or gatherings

WHY IT IS NOT NECESSARY

- The existing laws and powers of the Police mean that anyone harassing other people entering venues can be stopped
- There is no evidence that the current Police powers are insufficient to maintain law and order outside abortion clinics

IS THE PARLIAMENT PREPARED TO EXTEND THIS BILL?

- The current bill relates only to abortion clinics and the rights of those who are entering them
- If the parliament is prepared to enact legislation to create 150 metre “safe access zone” around an abortion clinic will they also do the same around Cathedrals and churches?
- Will the Parliament make it a crime, punishable by 6 months imprisonment, to interfere with any person coming to or going from Church and to obstruct footpaths or roads leading to the church as in the Safe Access Bill 2018?
- Will the Parliament make it a crime to communicate with a person going to or leaving a church in manner reasonably likely to cause them distress or anxiety?
- If the Parliament does not propose to make such a law for churches, or for other businesses why not? Are only abortion clinics sacred in New South Wales?

Please write or speak with your local Nationals Party member to express your concerns.

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