

Miles to go: despite decriminalisation, access to timely abortion still requires work: two nurse led advocacy projects.

Authors:

Catherine Bateman¹, Dr Lydia Mainey²

¹Latrobe Community Health Service, Morwell and Warragul, Victoria, Australia,

²School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Sciences, Central Queensland University, Cairns, Queensland, Australia

Background/Purpose:

Despite the removal of abortion from crimes acts across Australia, access remains difficult, particularly in areas far from metro centres. Obstacles include high costs, conscientious objections, a scarcity of providers, unsatisfactory skills among healthcare professionals, and complex referral processes, leading to dissatisfaction among pregnant individuals, community members, and providers. Two nurse-led advocacy projects have emerged: The Good Guide to Compassionate Termination of Pregnancy Care in Queensland and the Abortion Care Cascade in Gippsland, Victoria. These projects aim to coordinate advocacy and activism at multiple societal levels.

Approach:

Initiated in 2021 and 2024 respectively, these projects use the socio-ecological model to scrutinise factors influencing abortion access and care. Data were collected through meetings and correspondences with clinicians, NGOs, and consumers, and analysed thematically. The Queensland project's findings were shared with the Victorian team, who extended the scoping activity to map the context of abortion care in Gippsland. The findings were outlined onto a care cascade scaffold and tested with a larger stakeholder group.

Outcomes/Impact:

The Queensland project recognised issues such as stigma, deficient education, and siloed services, leading to the creation of the Good Guide to Termination of Pregnancy Care. The Victorian project identified enablers and enhancements within the system and community, promoting an environment where stakeholders could influence abortion care. The Abortion Care Cascade was drafted under principles including diagnosis, entry into care, initiation of preferred care, completion of abortion care, and follow-up.

Innovation and Significance:

These projects have enhanced the organisation of efforts to improve abortion care. The Good Guide influences healthcare policy, education, resource distribution, labour force support, and data collection. The Abortion Care Cascade provides a framework for preparing, executing, and monitoring abortion care, signifying effectiveness in coordinating care within and beyond the community. These projects feature the significance of viewing abortion care as a shared obligation among all stakeholders

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

No disclosures.