

Understanding Peer Support as Abortion Aftercare from the Perspectives of People Who Have Had Abortions

Authors:

Lily McAuliffe¹, [Hannah Bamba](#)¹, Mridula Shankar², Shelly Makleff³, Martha Vasquez Corona²

¹ *The Abortion Project, Melbourne, Australia*, ² *Nossal Institute for Global Health, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia*, ³ *Centre for Health Equity, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia*

Background/Purpose:

The Abortion Project (TAP) is a peer-led support and advocacy group that facilitates fortnightly, inclusive peer support groups fostering connection, community, and healing. In 2025, TAP partnered with The University of Melbourne with an aim of articulating the value of its peer support groups and how the model works as a form of abortion aftercare.

Approach:

The team developed Australia's first Theory of Change for abortion peer support based on TAP facilitators' lived experiences reducing abortion stigma and building connection. We held two workshops with 6 TAP facilitators and 3 researchers. We mapped TAP activities, the changes they can generate in participants, and how this can create broader social change. We developed a preliminary Theory of Change diagram and collectively refined it in the second workshop.

Outcomes/Impact:

Our Theory of Change articulates how peer support is a form of abortion aftercare. It identifies the resources needed for peer support groups (e.g., a safe space) and activities undertaken by facilitators (e.g., creating a judgement-free space) that lead to short- and medium-term outcomes for participants (e.g., exploration of complex experiences without fearing judgement; increased understanding of the right to respectful care). The peer support model can produce long-term outcomes in participants (e.g., increased awareness of medical misogyny; decreased stigma; increased wellbeing) and potentially contribute to broader impacts such as societal acceptance of a nuanced discourse around abortion and the availability of safe and accessible abortion aftercare for all who need it.

Innovation and Significance:

This Theory of Change fills an evidence gap about how people who have had abortions engage in peer support as a form of abortion aftercare. It builds understanding of the ways in which psychosocial aftercare can influence abortion experiences and resist reproductive injustice, with relevance for a range of abortion modalities and experiences.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

This work was funded by a Seed Grant from the Reproductive Justice Hallmark Research Initiative at the University of Melbourne.