

# "It's a legal procedure. So why isn't it readily available?"

Exploring healthcare providers' experiences of delivering abortion care at 20 weeks and over in Victoria

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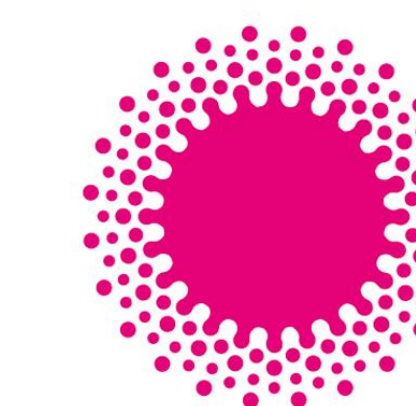
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MONASH University



the women's  
the royal women's hospital  
victoria australia



Burnet

## 1. Background

Abortions at **20 weeks and over** sought for **non-medicalised reasons** are associated with significant access difficulties due to:

- Legal restrictions
- Limited services
- Stigma

Little is known about this specific area of care.



## 2. Aim

- To determine the **enablers and barriers** to delivering abortion care at 20 weeks and over for indications other than fetal or maternal medicine, and;
- To examine how **quality of care** could be improved;

From a **healthcare provider perspective**, in one hospital in **Victoria, Australia**.

## 3. Methods

Study design    Exploratory qualitative study

Setting    Abortion and Contraception Service, Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia

Participants    Regular providers of abortions ≥20 weeks for non-medicalised reasons, recruited by convenience and purposive sampling

Data collection    In-depth, semi-structured interviews

Data analysis    Reflexive thematic analysis

## 4. Results

- 17 participants
- Medical, nursing, allied health backgrounds

### SUBTHEMES

- Strengthening the abortion service
- Building capacity in the healthcare system
- Struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic

"We're the only service providing this care...there are no options for patients" (P6)



- Prioritising the woman's needs
- Creating a safe space
- Delivering timely care

"The needs of the women are always paramount" (P9)



- Providing a very different kind of abortion
- Confronting emotional and ethical challenges
- Feeling supported and valued

"It can be quite mentally and emotionally draining" (P3)



### THEMES

Healthcare system level

Meeting external roadblocks: deficiencies in the wider healthcare system

Clinical level

Being committed to quality care: taking a holistic approach

Personal level

Surmounting challenges: being an abortion provider is difficult

## 5. Conclusions

- Abortion provision at 20 weeks and over for non-medicalised reasons is a **unique area of abortion care** that providers find both challenging and rewarding.
- **The lack of services** providing these abortions is a significant barrier to equitable access to safe care.

### Future directions

- Research and policies that **strengthen abortion provision** at 20 weeks and over in Victoria are needed, particularly to address workforce shortages and expand public provision.

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