

Submission to the Department of Health

Safe access zones – Proposal for reform in Western Australia Discussion Paper

31 May 2019

The Western Australian Council of Social Service Inc. (WACOSS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Health's *Safe access zones – Proposal for reforms in Western Australia* discussion paper.

WACOSS is the peak body of community service organisations and individuals in Western Australia. WACOSS stands for an inclusive, just and equitable society. We advocate for social and economic change to improve the wellbeing of Western Australians and to strengthen the community services sector that supports them. WACOSS is part of a national network consisting of ACOSS and the State and Territory Councils of Social Service, who assist people on low incomes and experiencing disadvantage Australia wide.

WACOSS supports the introduction of safe access zones around premises that provide abortion services in Western Australia. No person attempting to access or leaving premises at which abortions are provided should be subject to harassment, intimidation or obstruction. We consider the proposed list of prohibited behaviours as modelled on the Victorian legislation to be appropriate to prevent this from occurring. WACOSS also supports a minimum safe access zone size of 150 metres, consistent with the approaches in Queensland, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Victoria and Tasmania.

If the WA AIDS Council and the Western Australian Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies consider that it is necessary, WACOSS would support the introduction of safe access zones around premises where needle and syringe programs are delivered to prevent the intimidation and harassment of people accessing those services.

It is crucial that this legislation does not impede protest activities more generally or prevent workers at those premises from taking industrial action. For this reason, it is important that the nature of the premises under consideration is appropriately defined under the legislation and any discretion provided to the Minister is clear and strictly limited.

If you would like to discuss this submission further, please contact the WACOSS Research and Policy Development Leader Chris Twomey at chris@wacoss.org.au or 9420 7222.

Yours sincerely,



Louise Giolitto
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WACOSS