



*Nurse Practitioners
New Zealand*

Nurse Practitioners New Zealand

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Submission on:
Abortion Law Reform

Submission To: Abortion Law Reform
Law Commission
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Nurse Practitioners New Zealand (NPNZ) is an organisation representing Nurse Practitioners in New Zealand. Currently there are over 300 Nurse Practitioners in New Zealand across a diverse range of health areas. At present around 50% of these work within the settings of primary health care and women's health. Nurse Practitioners working in the area of primary health care and women's health are acknowledged specialists in their field, therefore able to fully consider the implications of a woman's request for consideration for a termination of pregnancy.

It is acknowledged that with issues such as a review of the Abortion Law Reform, there will be a wide divergence in views, therefore NPNZ will not be commenting on any issue that would be in conflict to members' personal viewpoint and will encourage individuals to submit.

NPNZ would like to submit a proposal that Abortion Law Reform consider a change to include Nurse Practitioners as health practitioners who are able to refer a woman for consideration of an abortion. The initial step in the process is for the woman to consult her health practitioner. In both the Abortion Law Reform and the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act, it is acknowledged that it is not always a doctor whom the woman initially consults. Both Nurse Practitioners and General Practitioners enrol patients under their own name. A woman must be able to obtain the same referral for consideration of a termination of pregnancy regardless of her enrolment location. At present, within the Abortion Law Reform and the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act only a doctor can refer a woman to abortion services. The legislation needs to acknowledge that a Nurse Practitioner can, and maybe the woman's lead primary health care provider, therefore a Nurse Practitioner should be able to consider a woman's request for an abortion just the same as if the woman had consulted a General Practitioner.

A Nurse Practitioner can assess, diagnose and treat patients who attend their clinics including ordering blood tests and radiological examinations pertinent to their field of expertise and refer to other specialists. A Nurse Practitioner working in the field of women's health or primary care is fully capable in providing all care for first or early antenatal visits, which is when a woman is mostly likely to be considering termination. This is a common presentation in Primary Health Care. Currently Section 88 of the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act funding rules prevent a Nurse Practitioner from ordering obstetric ultrasound scans for dates. This situation frequently creates impediments to care and additional stress to the woman involved in what is already a very stressful time for her. This also detracts from the complete care a Nurse Practitioner can, and is registered to provide

As stated, within the Abortion Law Reform information if a woman goes to a doctor seeking an abortion the doctor may decline to consider the case on the grounds of conscience. The doctor must however, inform the woman that she can seek an abortion through another doctor.

NPNZ requests the extension to recognise that an individual Nurse Practitioner may choose "to decline to consider the case on the grounds of conscience", and must in that instance inform the woman that she can seek an abortion through another doctor or Nurse Practitioner, to ensure that personal viewpoint and values are respected.

Submitted on behalf of Nurse Practitioners New Zealand.



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