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MEDIA RELEASE

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IT'S TIME TO DECRIMINALISE ABORTION IN NSW AND PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (**ALHR**) has expressed its strong support for the decriminalisation of abortion in NSW.

Benedict Coyne, ALHR President said, "Failure to provide safe, legal and accessible abortion services is a violation of fundamental human rights. ALHR supports the decriminalisation of abortion and the creation of exclusion zones surrounding abortion clinics as a way of protecting and promoting human rights."

"Those who seek abortions should not be treated as criminals and the majority of Australians recognise that our laws need to change to reflect this," said Mr Coyne. Data from the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes found that 81% of Australians believed a woman should have the right to choose whether or not she has an abortion. Mr Coyne continued, "The current NSW laws are archaic and not reflective of community values or of internationally recognised human rights principles."

Abortion is currently a criminal offence under the NSW Crimes Act. While abortion providers operate in New South Wales, they exist within an ambiguous legal space, and as a result, access to services is limited.

Mr Coyne said, "New South Wales and Queensland are the only remaining States that do not provide for legal abortions. The Queensland parliament is currently considering a bill to decriminalise abortion. Every other state and territory has passed laws that provide legal access to abortion services."

Background Briefing Material

The *Abortion Law Reform (Miscellaneous Acts Amendment) Bill 2016* (The Bill), was introduced into the NSW parliament by **Greens MLC Dr. Mehreen Faruqi** last week. The Bill would decriminalise abortion and enact safe access zone to prevent harassment and intimidation of women accessing health clinics, similar to laws in Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. **Labor MLC Penny Sharpe** has also introduced a bill regarding safe access zones into the NSW parliament (the [*Summary Offences Amendment \(Safe Access to Reproductive Health Clinics\) Bill 2016*](#)).

Dr Faruqi and Ms Sharpe will both be panelists at an event hosted by ALHR on abortion law reform in NSW at **NSW Parliament House at 6pm on Tuesday 23 August 2016**. They will be joined by **Associate Professor Kirsten Black** (Joint Head of Discipline, Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Neonatology, University of Sydney), and **Catherine Henry** (health and medical lawyer, Catherine Henry Partners). The panel will be facilitated by ALHR's Women and Girls' Rights Committee Chair **Claire Hammerton**.

ALHR was established in 1993 and is a national network of solicitors, barristers, academics, judicial officers and law students who practise and promote international human rights law in Australia. ALHR has active and engaged National, State and Territory committees and a secretariat at La Trobe University Law School in Melbourne. Through advocacy, media engagement, education, networking, research and training, ALHR promotes, practices and protects universally accepted standards of human rights throughout Australia and overseas.

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**[For further details regarding the panel event at NSW Parliament House see
https://alhr.org.au/abortion-law-reform-nsw-human-rights-perspective/](https://alhr.org.au/abortion-law-reform-nsw-human-rights-perspective/)**