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Australian women and girls with disabilities still face forced sterilisation and abortions.

Leading human rights lawyers have expressed alarm at the continued forced sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities in Australia. Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) says concerns raised this week by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its report on Australia should shock governments into action.

Susan Peukert, Chair of ALHR's Disability Rights Subcommittee said, "Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to forced sterilisation, forced contraception and even forced termination of their pregnancies carried out in the name of medical care. Forced sterilisation refers to the practice of sterilising a person without their knowledge or consent. Sterilisation is irreversible and has a profound physical and psychological impact upon women and girls with disabilities."

"Federal, State and Territory Governments must take immediate, fully funded, steps to end these harmful practises which are quite clearly in breach of Australia's international legal obligations and which have again been called out by the UN. In its report on Australia the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted its concern that women and girls with disabilities in Australia have been subjected to forced sterilisation, the non-consensual administration of contraceptives and abortions. This is in violation of not only their rights under the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but also their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In signing up to these international laws Australia has accepted as fundamental human rights the right to bodily integrity, the right of women and girls to make their own reproductive health decisions, and the right to found and maintain families. Women and girl's with disabilities are being failed."

"While the reporting of forced sterilisation is not considered robust, according to the [Australian Guardianship and Administration Council](#) in the financial year of 2016-17 there were ten forced sterilisations carried out in Australia. It is likely that there were more. This is clearly unacceptable."

"ALHR is deeply concerned that this pervasive form of violence, control and abuse continues to be experienced by women and girls with disabilities in Australia. It is a violation of their fundamental human rights and denies them the ability to retain their fertility on an equal basis with others and to form a family - a fundamental freedom enjoyed by persons without disabilities. This has the effect of devaluing of the lives and status of women and girls with disabilities in our society."

Peukert continued, "ALHR renews its calls for domestic law reform within Australia and for the Federal Government to step up as a leader in the development of enhanced, international measures consistent with the CRPD and the CEDAW, to ensure that any sterilisation of a woman or girl with disabilities in Australia can only be carried out with their free and informed consent."

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ALHR was established in 1993 and is a national association of Australian 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 specialist thematic committees. Through advocacy, media engagement, education, networking, research and training, ALHR promotes, practices and protects universally accepted standards of human rights throughout Australia and overseas.