

# NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

## TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY LAW REFORM ACT 2017

As in force at 1 December 2018

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# NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

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## TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY LAW REFORM ACT 2017

**An Act to reform the law relating to the termination of pregnancy, and  
for related purposes**

### **Part 1 Preliminary matters**

#### **1 Short title**

This Act may be cited as the *Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Act 2017*.

#### **2 Commencement**

This Act commences on the day fixed by the Administrator by *Gazette* notice.

#### **3 Objects of Act**

The objects of this Act are:

- (a) to reform the law relating to terminations of pregnancy; and
- (b) to enable reasonable and safe access by women to terminations; and
- (c) to regulate health practitioners performing terminations.

#### **4 Definitions**

In this Act:

***ATSI health practitioner*** means a person registered under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* to practise in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice profession (other than as a student).

***authorised***, in relation to an ATSI health practitioner, midwife, nurse or pharmacist, means authorised under the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2012* to supply or administer a termination drug.

**CHO** means the person appointed under section 67 of the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* to be the Chief Health Officer.

**credentialed** means having the verified qualifications, training, experience, professional standing and other relevant professional attributes of a medical practitioner used for the purpose of forming a view about the competence, performance and professional suitability of the medical practitioner.

**directing** a health practitioner, in the performance of a termination, includes supervising the health practitioner in the performance of the termination.

**health practitioner** means a person registered under one of the following health professions within the meaning of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* (other than as a student):

- (a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice;
- (b) medical;
- (c) midwifery;
- (ca) nursing;
- (d) pharmacy.

**midwife** means a person registered under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* to practise in the midwifery profession (other than as a student).

**nurse** means a person registered under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* to practise in the nursing profession (other than as a student).

**perform a termination**, see section 6.

**pharmacist** means a person registered under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* to practise in the pharmacy profession (other than as a student).

**premises for performing terminations:**

- (a) means premises where either or both of the following take place:
  - (i) terminations are performed by medical practitioners;
  - (ii) health practitioners assist in the performance of terminations; but

- (b) does not include a pharmacy.

**professional standards and guidelines** means professional standards and guidelines applicable to medical practitioners in the performance of terminations, including standards and guidelines for the following matters:

- (a) the assessment of a woman for a termination;
- (b) the availability of suitable facilities and equipment for the performance of a termination;
- (c) access to emergency services, if required, during or following a termination;
- (d) procedures relating to the performance of a termination;
- (e) the availability of support services, including counselling.

**publish** means communicate or disseminate information in a way or to an extent that makes it available to, or likely to come to the notice of, the public or a section of the public or anyone else.

**safe access zone** means the area:

- (a) within the boundary of premises for performing terminations; and
- (b) within 150 metres outside the boundary.

**suitably qualified medical practitioner** means a medical practitioner who:

- (a) is an obstetrician or gynaecologist; or
- (b) is credentialed in the provision of advice, performance of procedures and giving treatment in the area of fertility control.

**termination** means intentionally terminating a woman's pregnancy.

**termination drug** means a substance or combination of substances, to which the current Poisons Standard applies under the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* (Cth), used for terminations.

**woman** means a female person of any age.

*Note for section 4*

*The Interpretation Act 1978 contains definitions and other provisions that may be relevant to this Act.*

## 5 Application of Criminal Code

Part IIAA of the Criminal Code applies to an offence against this Act.

*Note for section 5*

*Part IIAA of the Criminal Code states the general principles of criminal responsibility, establishes general defences, and deals with burden of proof. It also defines, or elaborates on, certain concepts commonly used in the creation of offences.*

## Part 2 Role of health practitioners

### 6 Performing a termination

- (1) A medical practitioner who does any of the following, intending to induce an abortion, **performs a termination**:
  - (a) performs a surgical procedure;
  - (b) prescribes, supplies or administers a termination drug;
  - (c) any other action.
- (2) An ATSI health practitioner, a midwife or a nurse assists in the performance of a termination by supplying or administering, under the direction of a medical practitioner, a termination drug, knowing it is intended to induce an abortion.
- (3) A pharmacist assists in the performance of a termination by supplying, under the direction of a medical practitioner, a termination drug, knowing it is intended to induce an abortion.

### 7 Termination of pregnancy by a suitably qualified medical practitioner at not more than 14 weeks

A suitably qualified medical practitioner may perform a termination on a woman who is not more than 14 weeks pregnant, if the medical practitioner considers the termination is appropriate in all the circumstances, having regard to:

- (a) all relevant medical circumstances; and
- (b) the woman's current and future physical, psychological and social circumstances; and
- (c) professional standards and guidelines.

**8 Termination of pregnancy by an authorised health practitioner at not more than 14 weeks**

- (1) A suitably qualified medical practitioner may direct an authorised ATSI health practitioner, authorised midwife, authorised nurse or authorised pharmacist to assist in the performance of a termination on a woman who is not more than 14 weeks pregnant, if the medical practitioner considers the termination is appropriate.
- (2) In considering whether the termination is appropriate, as mentioned in subsection (1), the medical practitioner must have regard to each of the matters mentioned in section 7.
- (3) An authorised ATSI health practitioner, authorised midwife or authorised nurse may supply or administer a termination drug:
  - (a) if directed to do so by a suitably qualified medical practitioner; and
  - (b) in accordance with that direction.
- (4) An authorised pharmacist may supply a termination drug:
  - (a) if directed to do so by a suitably qualified medical practitioner; and
  - (b) in accordance with that direction.

**9 Termination of pregnancy by a suitably qualified medical practitioner at not more than 23 weeks**

A suitably qualified medical practitioner may perform a termination on a woman who is more than 14 weeks pregnant, but not more than 23 weeks pregnant, if:

- (a) the medical practitioner has consulted with at least one other suitably qualified medical practitioner who has assessed the woman; and
- (b) each medical practitioner considers the termination is appropriate in all the circumstances having regard to each of the matters mentioned in section 7.

**10 Termination of pregnancy where life at risk**

A medical practitioner may perform a termination on a woman in an emergency if the medical practitioner considers the termination is necessary to preserve the life of the woman.

**11 Medical practitioner who has conscientious objection**

- (1) This section applies if a woman requests a medical practitioner to advise on a proposed termination or perform a termination on the woman, and the medical practitioner has a conscientious objection in relation to terminations.
- (2) The medical practitioner must:
  - (a) inform the woman that the medical practitioner has a conscientious objection in relation to the termination contemplated by the woman; and
  - (b) refer the woman, within a clinically reasonable time, to another medical practitioner known by the medical practitioner not to have a conscientious objection in relation to terminations.

**12 Authorised health practitioner who has conscientious objection**

- (1) This section applies if a suitably qualified medical practitioner directs an authorised ATSI health practitioner, authorised midwife, authorised nurse or authorised pharmacist to assist in the performance of a termination and the ATSI health practitioner, midwife, nurse or pharmacist has a conscientious objection in relation to terminations.
- (2) The medical practitioner must instead direct another authorised ATSI health practitioner, authorised midwife, authorised nurse or authorised pharmacist, known by the medical practitioner not to have a conscientious objection in relation to terminations, to assist.

**13 Duty to perform or assist when necessary to save life**

- (1) Despite any conscientious objection in relation to terminations, a medical practitioner (including a medical practitioner who is not a suitably qualified medical practitioner) is under a duty to perform a termination in an emergency where the termination is necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant woman.
- (2) Despite any conscientious objection in relation to terminations, an ATSI health practitioner, a midwife or a nurse is under a duty to assist a medical practitioner in an emergency where a termination is necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant woman.



## Part 3 Safe access zones

### 14 Prohibited conduct in a safe access zone

- (1) A person commits an offence if:
- (a) the person intentionally engages in prohibited conduct; and
  - (b) the prohibited conduct occurs in a safe access zone and the person is reckless in relation to that circumstance.

Maximum penalty: 100 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months.

- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply if:
- (a) the person is a police officer acting in the duties of law enforcement and the conduct of the police officer is reasonable in the circumstances for the performance of those duties; or
  - (b) the person is employed at premises for performing terminations and the conduct of the employee is reasonable in the circumstances.
- (3) For conduct mentioned in subsection (4), definition ***prohibited conduct***, paragraph (b), it is immaterial whether a person was entering or leaving, or attempting to enter or leave, premises for performing terminations for an offence to be committed.

- (4) In this section:

***prohibited conduct*** means:

- (a) harassing, hindering, intimidating, interfering with, threatening or obstructing a person, including by recording the person by any means without the person's consent and without a reasonable excuse, that may result in deterring the person from:
  - (i) entering or leaving premises for performing terminations; or
  - (ii) performing, or receiving, a termination at premises for performing terminations; and

- (b) an act that could be seen or heard by a person in the vicinity of premises for performing terminations, that may result in deterring the person or another person from:
  - (i) entering or leaving the premises; or
  - (ii) performing a termination, or receiving a termination at the premises.

## **15 Publication of recording**

- (1) A person commits an offence if:
  - (a) the person intentionally publishes a recording of another person who is in a safe access zone; and
  - (b) the recording was made without the other person's consent; and
  - (c) the recording shows that the other person was entering or leaving, or attempting to enter or leave, premises for performing terminations; and
  - (d) the person is reckless in relation to the circumstances mentioned in paragraphs (b) and (c).

Maximum penalty: 100 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months.

- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply if the recording is published to a person who is authorised under a law in force in the Territory to receive the information in the recording.
- (3) It is a defence to a prosecution for an offence against subsection (1) if the defendant has a reasonable excuse.

## **16 Seizure of material used in offence**

- (1) This section applies if a police officer believes on reasonable grounds that a person:
  - (a) is committing an offence under section 14 or 15; or
  - (b) is likely to commit an offence under section 14 or 15.
- (2) The police officer may seize and remove any object, material, information, document, poster, picture or recording that was used, or is about to be used, in relation to an offence as mentioned in subsection (1).

**Part 4 Reporting requirements****17 Reports to CHO**

A medical practitioner who performs or directs the performance of a termination under this Act must provide to the CHO the information prescribed by regulation within the time prescribed by regulation.

**Part 5 Miscellaneous matters****18 Regulations**

- (1) The Administrator may make regulations under this Act.
- (2) The Regulations may:
  - (a) provide for an offence against a regulation to be an offence of strict or absolute liability; and
  - (b) for an offence against a regulation, prescribe a fine not exceeding 100 penalty units; and
  - (c) provide for the creation and maintenance of, by the CHO, a register relating to terminations or the health practitioners performing terminations; and
  - (d) provide for the setting of, by the CHO, record keeping and reporting standards or requirements for health practitioners performing terminations; and
  - (e) provide for the collection of, by the CHO, statistical data on matters relating to terminations; and
  - (f) provide for the setting and verification of, by the CHO, the credentials for suitably qualified medical practitioners; and
  - (g) provide for the setting of, by the CHO, standards, guidelines or requirements about the manner of doing or performing anything required or permitted to be done or performed under this Act; and
  - (h) apply, adopt or incorporate (with or without changes) the whole or part of a document as in force or existing at a particular time or from time to time.

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## ENDNOTES

**1****KEY**

Key to abbreviations

amd = amended  
 app = appendix  
 bl = by-law  
 ch = Chapter  
 cl = clause  
 div = Division  
 exp = expires/expired  
 f = forms  
 Gaz = Gazette  
 hdg = heading  
 ins = inserted  
 lt = long title  
 nc = not commenced

od = order  
 om = omitted  
 pt = Part  
 r = regulation/rule  
 rem = remainder  
 renum = renumbered  
 rep = repealed  
 s = section  
 sch = Schedule  
 sdiv = Subdivision  
 SL = Subordinate Legislation  
 sub = substituted

**2****LIST OF LEGISLATION*****Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Act 2017 (Act No. 7, 2017)***

Assent date	24 April 2017
Commenced	1 July 2017 ( <i>Gaz</i> S38, 28 June 2017)

***Health Practitioner Regulation (National Uniform Legislation) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018 (Act No. 28, 2018)***

Assent date	30 November 2018
Commenced	1 December 2018 (s 2)

**3****GENERAL AMENDMENTS**

General amendments of a formal nature (which are not referred to in the table of amendments to this reprint) are made by the *Interpretation Legislation Amendment Act 2018* (Act No. 22, 2018) to: s 4.

**4****LIST OF AMENDMENTS**

s 4	amd No. 28, 2018, s 25
pt 6 hdg	exp No. 7, 2017, s 23
pt 6	
div 1 hdg	exp No. 7, 2017, s 23
ss 19 – 20	exp No. 7, 2017, s 23
pt 6	
div 2 hdg	exp No. 7, 2017, s 23
ss 21 – 22	exp No. 7, 2017, s 23
pt 6	
div 3 hdg	exp No. 7, 2017, s 23
s 23	exp No. 7, 2017, s 23