

21 April 2021

Committee Secretariat
Health Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Submitted online

Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion (Safe Areas) Amendment Bill

Dear Committee Members

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) wishes to submit on the above Bill. The NZMA is New Zealand's largest medical organisation, with about 5,000 members from all areas of medicine. The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and to promote professional unity and values, and the health of all New Zealanders. Our submission has been informed by feedback from our Board, members and Advisory Councils.

The NZMA is fully supportive of this Bill which provides a regulation-making power to set up safe areas around specific abortion facilities, on a case-by-case basis. We note that the safe areas can be no more than 150 metres from any part of the protected facility, outside of which protests will be allowed by those who might otherwise feel that targeting vulnerable patients and staff is their right under the principle of freedom of speech.

We believe that it would be useful for the Bill to also cover a woman's support person such as a partner, parent, sibling, friend or guardian. As such, we suggest the Bill's explanatory note be expanded to: "*The purpose of the regulation-making power is to protect the safety and well-being, and respect the privacy and dignity, of women and their support persons accessing abortion facilities and practitioners providing and assisting with abortion services.*" We suggest that the definition of protected person in clause 13A(3) also be expanded to include a support person. This could take the form of a new subclause that defines such a person as being in a safe area for the purpose of *(e) providing support to a person who is accessing abortion services or seeking advice or information about abortion services*". Likewise, we suggest the addition of a similar subclause about support persons to clause 13C(2)(a).

We hope our feedback is helpful. We are not seeking the opportunity for an oral presentation to the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kate Baddock
NZMA Chair