

ACTS AMENDMENT (ABORTION) ACT 1998

Statement by Minister for Health

MR KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Health) [12.12 pm]: On 26 May 1998 the Acts Amendment (Abortion) Act 1998 came into operation. The legislation amended the Health Act 1911 and the Criminal Code, and provided for abortion to be justified in circumstances specified in the Act.

It is a requirement under section 8 of the Act that I carry out a review of the operation and effectiveness of the provisions of the Health Act and the Criminal Code related to abortion, as soon as practicable after the expiration of three years from the commencement of the Act. A report of the review is to be laid before each House of Parliament within four years after commencement of the Act.

I approved the commencement of the review in October 2001. Public submissions were requested by a newspaper advertisement in *The West Australian* on 20 December 2001. Information about the review has also been available on the Department of Health web site. The closing date for public submissions was 25 January 2002. Key stakeholders were invited by letter to contribute written submissions based on the terms of reference. I am advised that a total of 129 formal submissions were received from individuals and key stakeholder organisations.

As was seen in both this place and another place when the legislation was debated and ultimately passed, the issue of abortion is one that generates a very impassioned view in the community. Given this, the legislation that regulates abortion can never be taken lightly by any Government. Of greatest concern in reviewing this Act is the proper protection of the health and safety of women who choose the option of abortion. This is a complex issue, which canvasses a raft of areas, including the obvious disciplines of medicine and law, but which is undeniably shaped by divergent societal views.

This review is the first comprehensive review of the abortion legislation in this State. I am advised that the task of carefully considering all submissions and finalising the report has proved to be more time consuming than expected. However, I am pleased to advise the House today that the review process is extremely well advanced and will be completed within a month. When I have given the review my full consideration I will be in a position to table a report based on the review.