

Last Australian state decriminalises abortion

September 26 2019

Abortion was decriminalised in Australia's state of New South Wales on Thursday after weeks of contentious debate, bringing its laws into line with the rest of the country.

Politicians from across the [political spectrum](#) voted to overturn the laws that date back to 1900 and meant women seeking an abortion in Sydney or elsewhere in the state and their doctors could face up to 10 years in prison.

The legislation was delayed for months by a small group of conservatives from the ruling Liberal Party who rebelled against their leader.

The passage of the bill was cheered by pro-choice advocates, who had staged several large demonstrations in its support in recent months, countered by similarly passionate pro-life rallies.

Alex Greenwich, the independent representative for Sydney who introduced the bill, said he was "sorry it has taken us so long" to remove abortion from the criminal code.

"My deepest gratitude goes to my parliamentary colleagues and to the dedicated women's rights campaigners who have fought toward this for decades," he said in a statement.

Though prosecutions were rare, the procedure was only considered legal in Australia's most populous state if the doctor believed the woman's physical or [mental health](#) was in danger.

The new legislation allows abortions to be performed by a doctor on request up to 22 weeks, beyond which the consent of two doctors would be required.

It also makes it illegal for an unqualified person to perform an abortion, with the offence punishable by up to seven years in jail.

Amendments made to appease the bill's conservative opponents include tighter regulations on late-term abortions and mandated [medical care](#) for any baby born alive following a termination procedure.

New South Wales last year introduced "safe access zones" around [medical clinics](#) and hospitals that provide terminations, a measure aimed at stopping anti-[abortion](#) protesters from harassing women.

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Citation: Last Australian state decriminalises abortion (2019, September 26) retrieved 17 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-09-australian-state-decriminalises-abortion.html>

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