

Dear Sir Madam:

Re: Inquiry into the operation and effectiveness of patient assisted travel schemes

I write to you as the CEO of Marie Stopes International – a sexual and reproductive healthcare organisation with 7 centres in Australia. Delivering exceptional quality of care to our clients, our organisation provides a range of services including abortion.

We believe that all women have the right to legal, safe, timely and accessible services – regardless of their location. Currently, we assist women from metropolitan and regional NSW, QLD, WA and the ACT.

Marie Stopes International's aim is to provide services for all. If a client is experiencing financial difficulty, the team at our centres will take this into account and find a solution to meet their needs. Unfortunately, however, we are not in a position to pay for patient travel to and from our centres and receive no government grants to do so.

Meeting the law in each state, Marie Stopes International performs procedures to a maximum of 19 weeks and 6 days. It is in the interests of a woman's health to present for an abortion at an early gestation stage, and the majority of our clients have procedures performed at less than 12 weeks.

We do, however, see some women presenting at a later gestation and often this delay has been caused by the need to save up funds to pay for related travel and accommodation to our centres. These travel costs particularly impact on disadvantaged young women, teenagers and women who are sole parents.

It is our belief that effective patient assisted travel schemes would resolve this public health issue and ensure equitable, timely access to termination services.

Should you require further information please feel free to contact me on (03) 9658 7500

Regards,

Suzanne Dvorak
CEO
Marie Stopes International