



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## Time to ensure privacy and safe access

**MELBOURNE – Wednesday 19 August, 2015**

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) supports amending the Health and Wellbeing Act to ensure that staff and patients can safely access reproductive health services.

Medical privacy and the right to safely access health services is taken for granted by most Victorians. However, this has not been the experience of women who have for years been forced to contend with harassment and obstruction when accessing some reproductive health services.

WHV agrees freedom of speech means that anti-choice protesters have the right to protest, however this does not mean they have the right to harass or obstruct women from exercising their legal right to medical services and to privacy. Protesting should be done at a distance from health services so that it does not intimidate or harass patients.

"Women's Health Victoria supported Abortion Law Reform in 2008, ensuring that women have the right to a safe and legal abortion service. We now need to ensure that this is available without intimidation, obstruction or violation of medical privacy" said Rita Butera, Women's Health Victoria Executive Director. "As a community we have allowed this to go on for too long. It is time to take the next steps."

At a time when Victoria is calling for an end to violence against women, allowing the continued harassment and intimidation of women in public life is a double standard that must be challenged.

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**About Women's Health Victoria**

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, state-wide women's health promotion, information and advocacy service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV works collaboratively with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women.

The work of WHV is underpinned by a social model of health and a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants.

For more information, visit [www.whv.org.au](http://www.whv.org.au)