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Parliament removes abortion from Crimes Act

**HON ANDREW LITTLE (/MINISTER/HON-ANDREW-LITTLE)**

Justice (/portfolio/labour-led-government-2017-2020/justice)

Abortion has been removed from the Crimes Act under a new law passed by Parliament today.

“For over forty years abortion has been the only medical procedure considered a crime in New Zealand. But from now abortions will be rightly treated as a health issue,” Minister of Justice Andrew Little said.

“The previous law required a women seeking an abortion to go through many hoops. That resulted in delays to access a procedure, and that was less safe.

“The changes agreed to by Parliament will better ensure women get advice and treatment in a more timely way.

“The Bill was robustly debated in Parliament. Several changes were made, including strengthening the post-20 week abortion criteria.

“New Zealand women have campaigned for decades to have abortion treated as a health issue, instead of as a crime, including women like Dame Margaret Sparrow. This includes many former parliamentarians who worked hard for abortion reform.

“Today change has finally come, and safe abortion is legal in New Zealand,” Andrew Little said.

The key aspects of the reforms are:

- Removing the current offences for abortion from the Crimes Act for health practitioners and women

- For pregnancies up to 20 weeks' gestation, allowing the decision to have an abortion to be made by the woman in consultation with a qualified health practitioner
- Providing a statutory test for abortion for pregnancies of more than 20 weeks' gestation
- Ensuring that women know that counselling is available, if needed, both before and after an abortion
- Requiring the Minister of Health to take reasonable steps to ensure the availability of abortion, counselling, contraception and other reproductive health services in New Zealand.



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