

South Australian Abortion Reporting Committee

Annual Report for the Year 2019

May 2022



Government
of South Australia

Wellbeing SA

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Background

Legislation

Medical termination of pregnancy became legal in South Australia in 1970. The *Criminal Law Consolidation (Medical Termination of Pregnancy) Regulations 2011* require the notification of medical terminations of pregnancy on prescribed forms to the Chief Executive of the Department for Health and Wellbeing, through the attached office of Wellbeing SA. It is from these notifications that the abortion statistics are collated.

Abortion Reporting Committee

The SA Abortion Reporting Committee examines and reports on all medical terminations of pregnancy notified in South Australia. The Committee has nominees from the South Australian Branches of:

- The National Council of Women
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, and
- The Australian Association of Social Workers

The terms of reference of the Committee are to ensure completeness and compliance with legislation for notifications of medical terminations of pregnancy in South Australia; to examine and report on the pattern of terminations, and to consider any measures that may need to be taken to improve health services and morbidity relating to terminations of pregnancy, so that appropriate advice may be given to the Chief Executive of the Department for Health and Wellbeing.

Data collection

Notifications are received from doctors who conduct terminations of pregnancy, via the data collection form included in Appendix 1. The notification form is filled out soon after the termination is complete, and therefore only captures complications known at that point in time. To improve the ascertainment of complications that occur after the termination, a data linkage is then conducted with South Australian hospital morbidity data (Integrated South Australian Activity Collection). This linkage identifies any complications that occurred after the termination was complete, that resulted in a public hospital admission.

Statistics for 2019

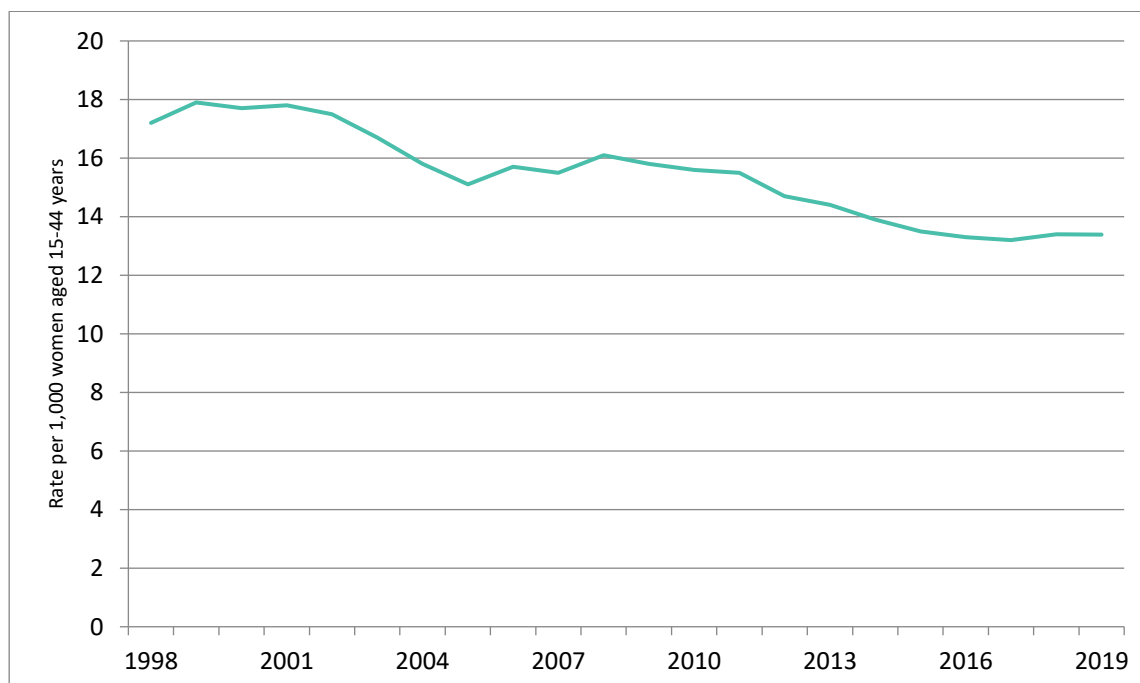
Numbers and rates

There were 4,462 terminations of pregnancy notified in South Australia in 2019, compared with 4,417 in 2018. The termination rate in South Australia has been declining over the past decade and has plateaued in the most recent 5-year period. In 2019 the termination of pregnancy rate was 13.4 per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1: Number of pregnancy terminations, and rate per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years, South Australia, 2000-2019

Year	Number	Termination rate	Year	Number	Termination rate
2000	5,571	17.7	2010	5,049	15.6
2001	5,575	17.8	2011	5,009	15.5
2002	5,455	17.5	2012	4,765	14.7
2003	5,205	16.7	2013	4,683	14.4
2004	4,926	15.8	2014	4,650	13.9
2005	4,710	15.1	2015	4,441	13.5
2006	4,887	15.7	2016	4,348	13.3
2007	4,883	15.5	2017	4,349	13.2
2008	5,099	16.1	2018	4,417	13.4
2009	5,049	15.8	2019	4,462	13.4

Figure 1: Pregnancy termination rate per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years, South Australia, 1998-2019



Age of women

The age distribution of women who had a termination of pregnancy in 2019 is shown in Table 2. Among the five-year age groups, the highest pregnancy termination rate was among women aged 25-29 years (19.9 terminations per 1,000 women). Pregnancy termination rates were relatively stable for teenage women, from 8.0 per 1,000 women in 2018 to 7.3 per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years in 2019.

Table 2: Number and rate of pregnancy terminations by age group, South Australia, 2019

Age group	Number	%	Estimated resident female population 2019 ¹	Termination rate per 1,000 women
Under 15	10	0.2	-	n/a
15-19	355	8.0	50,057	7.3 ²
20-24	1,088	24.4	56,260	19.3
25-29	1,156	25.9	57,989	19.9
30-34	954	21.4	59,265	16.1
35-39	670	15.0	56,913	11.8
40-44	205	4.6	52,088	4.4 ³
45 and over	24	0.5	-	n/a

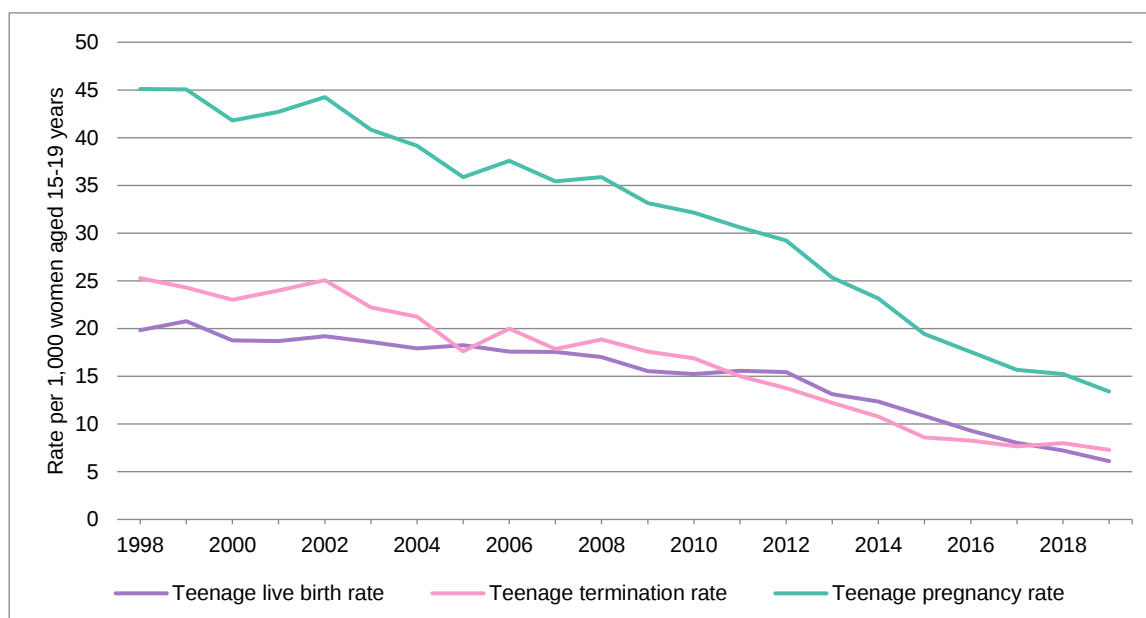
¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. Population estimates by age and sex, Regions of South Australia, 2019. Canberra: ABS, 2019 (Catalogue No 3235.0)

² includes terminations for women aged under 15

³ includes terminations for women aged 45 and over

The teenage pregnancy rate (including live births and induced terminations) has been declining steadily since 2002, and in the most recent period has decreased from 15.2 in 2018 to 13.4 per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years in 2019 (Figure 2). The teenage birth rate has continued to decline over this period, while teenage termination rates have decreased over the most recent five year period from 8.6 in 2015 to 7.3 per 1,000 women in 2019.

Figure 2: Teenage pregnancy, termination and birth rates¹, SA, 1998-2019



¹Terminations and births to women aged less than 15 years are included in the numerators

Residential region and health service category

The proportion of women residing in the metropolitan Adelaide region who had their termination in a metropolitan hospital (either private or public) was very high at 99%. However, only 16.4% of women residing in country South Australia had their termination in a country hospital, with most women travelling to metropolitan areas (Table 3).

Most terminations were conducted in metropolitan public hospitals (95.1%), followed by country hospitals (3.8%) and metropolitan private hospitals (1.0%). The distribution of terminations by health service category has been relatively stable over the past five years.

Table 3: Pregnancy terminations by residential region and health service category, South Australia, 2019

Residential Region	Health Service Category						
	Metro Public		Metro Private		Country		Total
	Number	% of residential region	Number	% of residential region	Number	% of residential region	Number
Metropolitan	3,556	97.9	41	1.1	36	1.0	3,633
Country	676	82.9	5	0.6	134	16.4	815
Unknown	13	92.9	0	0.0	1	7.1	14
Total	4,245	95.1	46	1.0	171	3.8	4,462

Of the terminations conducted in a metropolitan public hospital, 68.1% (3,038) were conducted by the Pregnancy Advisory Centre. A full list of terminations by metropolitan public hospitals is presented below (Table 4).

Table 4: Pregnancy terminations in metropolitan public hospitals, South Australia, 2019

Metropolitan public hospital	Number	% terminations in metropolitan public hospitals	% all terminations
Pregnancy Advisory Centre	3,038	71.6	68.1
Flinders Medical Centre	497	11.7	11.1
Noarlunga Health Services	298	7.0	6.7
Lyell McEwin Hospital	287	6.8	6.4
Women's and Children's	123	2.9	2.8
Royal Adelaide Hospital	1	0.0	0.0
The Queen Elizabeth Hospital	1	0.0	0.0
Total	4,245	100	95.1

Clinicians conducting terminations

General practitioners conducted 51.7% of the terminations in South Australia in 2019, followed by medical practitioners in family advisory clinics (26.8%, Table 5). The overall proportion of terminations conducted by general/medical practitioners is slightly higher than 2018 at 78.5% of all terminations (74.2% in 2018), with the remaining 21.5% of terminations in 2019 being conducted by obstetricians and gynaecologists, including those in training.

Table 5: Pregnancy terminations by category of doctor, South Australia, 2019

Category of doctor conducting termination	Number	%
General practitioner	2,305	51.7
Medical practitioner in family advisory clinic	1,198	26.8
Obstetrician/gynaecologist	854	19.1
Trainee obstetrician/gynaecologist	105	2.4
Total	4,462	100.0

Reported reason for termination

In 2019, 95.7% of terminations conducted were for the woman's mental health, 3.2% for congenital anomalies and 0.6% for specified medical conditions (Table 6). Of the 144 terminations for congenital anomalies, 84 (58.3%) were for chromosomal anomalies detected or suspected prenatally, and the remaining 60 terminations (41.7%) were for other fetal anomalies (Table 7).

Table 6: Reported reason for termination of pregnancy, South Australia, 2019

Reason	Number	%
Mental health of woman	4,271	95.7
Congenital anomalies	144	3.2
Specified medical condition of woman	28	0.6
Pre-existing psychiatric condition	18	0.4
Other	1	0.0
Total	4,462	100.0

Table 7: Reported reason for termination for congenital anomalies, South Australia, 2019

Reason for termination	Number	%
Chromosomal abnormality	84	58.3
Other fetal abnormality	60	41.7
Total	144	100.0

Terminations by gestational age

In 2019, the majority of pregnancy terminations were conducted in the first trimester (90.8%). The proportion conducted in the second trimester was 9.2% (Table 8), consistent with the average over the past five years (8.9%).

Table 8: Gestation at termination by trimester and age of women, South Australia, 2019

Age of women (years)	First trimester		Second trimester		Total Number
	Number	% of age group	Number	% of age group	
Under 15	6	60.0	4	40.0	10
15-19	318	89.6	37	10.4	355
20-24	998	91.7	90	8.3	1,088
25-29	1,073	92.8	83	7.2	1,156
30-34	855	89.6	99	10.4	954
35-39	590	88.1	80	11.9	670
40 and over	210	91.7	19	8.3	229
Total	4,050	90.8	412	9.2	4,462

The proportion of terminations conducted at 20 weeks gestation or later was 1.8% (Table 9), lower than the proportion in 2018 (2.1%). Of the 82 pregnancy terminations conducted at 20 weeks gestation or later, 43 were for congenital anomalies (52.4%), 34 were for the mental health of the woman (42.6%) and 3 terminations for specified medical conditions of the woman (3.7%). Terminations for congenital anomalies are often conducted after 20 weeks gestation as many fetal conditions are detected only in the second trimester.

Table 9: Reported reason for termination of pregnancy by gestation, South Australia, 2019

Reason for termination	Gestation (weeks)						Total Number
	<14		14-19		20+		
	Number	% of reason	Number	% of reason	Number	% of reason	
Mental health of woman	3,983	93.3	254	5.9	34	0.8	4,271
Congenital anomalies	40	27.8	61	42.4	43	29.9	144
Specified medical condition of woman	12	42.9	13	46.4	3	10.7	28
Pre-existing psychiatric	14	77.8	2	11.1	2	11.1	18
Other	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Total	4,050	90.8	330	7.4	82	1.8	4,462

Method of pregnancy termination

In 2019 the majority (47.6%) of pregnancy terminations were conducted using Mifepristone and Misoprostol (Table 10). Procedures with Mifepristone as a cervical primer prior to vacuum aspiration or dilatation and curettage were not specifically differentiated. Vacuum aspiration/dilatation and curettage was used in 42.0% of all terminations. The use of Mifepristone and Misoprostol continues to increase in use over the past 5 years (29.9% of all terminations in 2015).

Table 10: Method of pregnancy termination, South Australia, 2019

Method for termination	Number	%
Mifepristone +/- Misoprostol	2,119	47.5
Vacuum aspiration / Dilatation and curettage	1,876	42.0
Dilatation and evacuation	448	10.0
Vaginal prostaglandin	12	0.3
Other*	7	0.2
Total	4,462	100.0

*Other includes hysterectomy and ABD hysterotomy

For terminations of pregnancy conducted in the first trimester, Mifepristone and Misoprostol was utilised for the majority of cases (50.8%) followed by vacuum aspiration/dilatation and curettage (45.9%, Table 11). For terminations of pregnancy conducted in the second trimester, dilatation and evacuation was utilised for the majority of cases (76.9%).

Table 11: Method of pregnancy termination by trimester, South Australia, 2019

Method of termination	First trimester		Second trimester		Total Number
	Number	% first trimester	Number	% second trimester	
Mifepristone +/- Misoprostol	2,058	50.8	61	14.8	2,119
Vacuum aspiration / Dilatation and curettage	1,859	45.9	17	4.1	1,876
Dilatation and evacuation	131	3.2	317	76.9	448
Vaginal prostaglandin	0	0.0	12	2.9	12
Other	2	0.0	5	1.2	7
Total	4,050	100.0	412	100.0	4,462

Complications

There were 223 (5.0%) women who experienced complications related to the termination of pregnancy, which was higher than the proportion in 2018 (3.3%). One hundred (44.8%) of these complications were notified on the data collection form soon after the termination. To improve the ascertainment of complications resulting after the termination, a data linkage was conducted with the South Australian hospital morbidity data (Integrated South Australian Activity Collection), which records hospital admissions. A further 123 with complications (55.2%) were identified through this process.

The most common complication was retained products of conception (191 women), which represented 85.7% of all complications and occurred in 4.3% of all terminations (Table 12). Uterine infection was the second most common complication (8 women), which represented 3.6% of all complications and occurred in 0.2% of all terminations. Post-operative haemorrhage complications continues to decrease from 2.8% of all complications in 2018 to 0.9% in 2019.

Table 12: Complications resulting from termination of pregnancy, South Australia, 2019

Main complication	Number of women with complication	% of all women with complications	% of all women with termination procedures
Retained products of conception	191	85.7	4.3
Uterine infection	8	3.6	0.2
Haemorrhage intra-operative	5	2.2	0.1
Bleeding	2	0.9	0.0
Perforated/trauma to uterus	2	0.9	0.0
Sepsis	2	0.9	0.0
Failed procedure	1	0.4	0.0
Haemorrhage post-operative	1	0.4	0.0
Other	11	4.9	0.2
Total	223	100.0	5.0

The two most common termination methods in 2019 were Mifepristone and Misoprostol and vacuum aspiration/dilatation and curettage. Terminations using these methods resulted in complication rates of 8.8% and 1.5% respectively (Table 13).

Overall, 178 (79.8%) women with complications following an initial procedure progressed to a surgical procedure, including 158 women who had a termination of pregnancy with Mifepristone and Misoprostol as the initial procedure.

Table 13: Method of termination resulting in complication, South Australia, 2019

Method of termination	Number of terminations	Number of complications	Number of subsequent surgical D&C	% of termination method with complication	% of complication method with subsequent D&C
Mifepristone +/- Misoprostol	2,119	187	158	8.8	84.5
Vacuum aspiration / Dilatation and curettage	1,876	28	17	1.5	60.7
Dilatation and evacuation	448	5	3	1.1	60.0
Vaginal prostaglandin	12	2	0	16.7	0.0
Other	7	1	0	14.3	0.0
Total	4,462	223	178	5.0	79.8

In 2019 there was one failed termination procedure. Of the 187 women with complications reported following induced abortion with Mifepristone and Misoprostol, 170 (90.9%) were due to retained products of conception.

Table 14: Complication type and method of termination procedure, South Australia, 2019

Method of termination	Number of complications	Retained products conception	Uterine infection	Haemorrhage intra-operative	Bleeding	Perforated/trauma to uterus	Sepsis	Failed procedure	Haemorrhage post-operative	Other
Mifepristone + Misoprostol	187	170	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Vacuum Aspiration	22	15	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Dilation-Curettage	6	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Vaginal Prostaglandins	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dilation and Evacuation	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	223	191	8	5	2	2	2	1	1	11

Previous pregnancy terminations

Of the 4,462 women who had pregnancy terminations in 2019, 1,607 (36.0%) had undergone a previous termination (Table 15). The proportion of women who had a previous termination generally increased with age. Table 16 (below) shows the number of previous terminations by age group.

Table 15: Women with previous pregnancy terminations by age, South Australia, 2019

Age (Years)	Number	% of age group	% of all terminations
< 20	29	7.9	0.6
20-24	291	26.7	6.5
25-29	433	37.5	9.7
30-34	438	45.9	9.8
35-39	308	46.0	6.9
40+	108	47.2	2.4
Total	1,607	36.0	36.0

Table 16: Number of previous pregnancy terminations by age of women, South Australia, 2019

Number of previous terminations	Age group							Number	%
	< 15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40+		
0	10	326	797	723	516	362	121	2,855	64.0
1	0	24	231	265	248	150	77	995	22.3
2	0	5	41	117	119	92	22	396	8.9
3	0	0	10	34	38	37	7	126	2.8
4+	0	0	9	17	33	29	2	90	2.0
Total	10	355	1,088	1,156	954	670	229	4,462	100.0

Total Induced Abortion Rates

The total first abortion rate (TFAR) is a method used to estimate the proportion of women who will experience a termination of pregnancy in their reproductive lifetime (see Methods and Terminology). The TFAR for 2019 was 253.7 per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years (Table 17). This suggests that 25.3% of women would have at least one termination of pregnancy in their reproductive lifetime if they experienced the termination of pregnancy rates of the different age groups for 2019.

The total induced abortion rate (TAR) is the sum of pregnancy termination rates for each of the five-year age groups multiplied by five. This can be calculated using the rates in Table 2 and in 2019 was 390.4 per 1,000 women aged 15-44. This represents the number of induced abortions 1,000 women would have during their lifetime if they experienced the induced abortion rates of the different age groups for 2019.

Table 17: Calculation of total first induced abortion rate (TFAR), South Australia, 2019

Age (years)	Number of women who had terminations (A)	Number of women who had previous terminations (B)	Number of women who had first termination (A) - (B)	Estimated resident female population 30 June 2019 ¹	First termination of pregnancy rate per 1,000 women
15-19	365	29	336	50,057	6.7 ²
20-24	1,088	291	797	56,260	14.2
25-29	1,156	433	723	57,989	12.5
30-34	954	438	516	59,265	8.7
35-39	670	308	362	56,913	6.4
40+	229	108	121	52,088	2.3 ³
Total	4,462	1607	2,855	332,572	8.6

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. Population estimates by age and sex, Regions of South Australia, 2019. Canberra: ABS, 2019 (Catalogue No 3235.0)

² includes terminations for women aged under 15

³ includes terminations for women aged 45 and over

Methods and Terminology

Termination of pregnancy

The removal or expulsion of a pregnancy from the uterus via surgical or medical intervention, and excludes spontaneous abortions or miscarriages

Pregnancy termination rate

All rates of populations were calculated using the reproductive age range 15 to 44 years. Terminations occurred in women that were younger or older than this age group although in small numbers. These events were added to the numerator for the 15 to 19 years group or the 40 to 44 years group respectively.

Total abortion rate (TAR)

The sum of the five-year age-specific termination of pregnancy rates, multiplied by five. This represents the number of terminations of pregnancy that 1,000 women would have during their reproductive lifetime if they experienced the rates of the year shown

Total first abortion rate (TFAR)

The sum of the five-year age-specific termination of pregnancy rates of women experiencing their first termination, multiplied by five. The total first abortion rate (TFAR) is a method used to estimate the proportion of women who will experience a termination of pregnancy in their reproductive lifetime

Appendix 1 Data Collection Form

CRIMINAL LAW CONSOLIDATION (MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY) REGULATIONS 1996
**CERTIFICATE TO BE COMPLETED WHEN AN ABORTION IS PERFORMED
UNDER SECTION 82A OF THE CRIMINAL LAW CONSOLIDATION ACT 1935**

SCHEDULE 1- Doctor's certificates and notice
A copy of this form must be retained by the doctor who performed the termination for a period of three years commencing on the date of the termination. The original form is to be delivered or posted in a sealed envelope *within 28 days of the termination of the pregnancy* to the Chief Executive, Department of Health (Pregnancy Outcome Unit), P.O. Box 6 Rundle Mall, Adelaide, SA 5000.
The envelope must be clearly marked with the words "STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL".

PLEASE USE BLOCK LETTERS

PART A-CERTIFICATES
NAME, ADDRESS AND QUALIFICATIONS OF DOCTOR WHO PROPOSES TO TERMINATE
PREGNANCY OR, IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY TERMINATION, WHO HAS TERMINATED PREGNANCY

.....

NAME, ADDRESS AND QUALIFICATIONS OF OTHER DOCTOR JOINING IN CERTIFICATE FOR ORDINARY
TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

.....

FULL NAME AND ADDRESS OF PREGNANT WOMAN

.....

PREGNANT WOMAN'S STATED PERIOD OF RESIDENCY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA BEFORE THE DATE OF THIS
CERTIFICATE.....

REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

.....

DIAGNOSIS (Primary condition *must* be specified)

.....

CERTIFICATE TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE AN ORDINARY TERMINATION
We certify that in the case of the woman named above (whom we have each personally examined) termination of pregnancy is justified under section 82A(1) (a) of the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* on the following grounds:

*1. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve greater risk to the life of the pregnant woman than if the pregnancy were terminated.

*2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve greater risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman than if the pregnancy were terminated.

*3. There is a substantial risk that, if the pregnancy were not terminated and the child were born, the child would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

(*Circle the appropriate number)

SIGNED.....DATE.....

SIGNED.....DATE.....

CERTIFICATE TO BE COMPLETED FOLLOWING AN EMERGENCY TERMINATION
I certify that in the case of the woman named above (whom I have personally examined) termination of pregnancy was justified under section 82A(1) (b) of the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* on the following grounds:

*4. Termination of the pregnancy was immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman.

*5. Termination of the pregnancy was immediately necessary to prevent grave injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

(*Circle the appropriate number)

SIGNED.....DATE.....

PART B-NOTICE TO BE COMPLETED FOLLOWING TERMINATION OF A PREGNANCY
The pregnancy to which the above certificate relates was terminated at-

.....

(Name of hospital)

..... on.....
(Address of hospital)

SIGNED.....DATE.....
(Doctor who terminated the pregnancy)

INFORMATION RELATING TO THE TERMINATION

(To be completed by the doctor who performed the termination)

1. Date of birth of woman: (Day, Month, Year)
2. Date of last menstrual period: (Day, Month, Year).....
If unknown, or uncertain, give clinical estimate in completed weeks of gestation when pregnancy terminated
3. Total number of **previous** pregnancies.....
Livebirths
Stillbirths
Spontaneous miscarriages
Ectopic pregnancies
Terminations
4. Number of previous terminations in South Australia (1970 or after)
Year of last termination in South Australia:
5. Date of admission to place of termination of pregnancy: (Day, Month, Year)
6. Date of termination of pregnancy: (Day, Month, Year)
7. Date of discharge from place of termination of pregnancy: (Day, Month, Year)
8. Grounds for termination of pregnancy:
(a) Medical condition of woman (specify).....
Obstetric disease
Non-obstetric disease.....
(b) Suspected medical condition of fetus (specify)
Genetic disorder
Non-genetic disorder

If account has been taken of the woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment, indicate reasons:

9. Method of termination: (circle one)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Dilatation and curettage | 7. Intravenous infusion |
| 2. Hysterotomy – abdominal | 8. Vaginal or cervical prostaglandin |
| 3. Hysterotomy – vaginal | 9. Dilatation and evacuation |
| 4. Hysterectomy | 10. Medical (specify)..... |
| 5. Vacuum aspiration | 11. Other (specify)..... |
| 6. Intra-uterine injection | |

10. Was sterilisation of the woman undertaken (circle one)

- | | |
|--------|-------|
| 1. Yes | 2. No |
|--------|-------|

11. Post-operative complications or death prior to the date of this notice: (circle)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. None | 5. Perforation of or trauma to body of uterus |
| 2. Sepsis | 6. Anaesthetic complication |
| 3. Haemorrhage-intra-operative | 7. Other (specify)..... |
| 4. Haemorrhage- post-operative | 8. Maternal death (specify cause)..... |

12. If readmitted/transferred

Place of transfer

Date of readmission/transfer : (Day, Month, Year).....

Date of second discharge: (Day, Month, Year)

Reason for readmission/transfer

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Residency in South Australia 1. less than specified time 2. more than specified time.....

Hospital where termination performed

--	--	--	--

 Date of receipt of notification

--	--	--	--	--	--

Doctor performing termination

--	--	--	--	--	--

 LGA

--	--	--	--

Doctor supporting termination

--	--	--	--	--	--

 Postcode

--	--	--	--

Section of Act

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For more information

Pregnancy Outcome Unit

PO Box 388, Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000

Call (08) 7117 9200 or Email WellbeingSAPregnancyStats@sa.gov.au

www.wellbeingsa.sa.gov.au

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

OFFICIAL