

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

(All participants)

Project ID: 30926

Project title: Access to sexual and reproductive health services in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic: barriers and facilitators

Chief Investigator

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You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

What does the research involve?

The aim of this study is to understand the intersecting barriers to sexual and reproductive health services during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia from the perspective of people seeking health services. We will use the findings to develop recommendations to improve access to high quality sexual and reproductive health services in Australia.

We are inviting you to participate in an interview to talk about your experiences trying to get abortion services in Australia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interview will be held over Zoom or telephone, and will take approximately one hour. We will schedule interviews between December 2021 and February 2022, at your convenience. Interviews will be audio recorded with your consent. A student on the research team will transcribe the interviews based on the recording.

Why were you invited for this research?

It is more challenging than usual to get healthcare services during the Covid-19 pandemic. You are being invited to participate because you tried to get or considered getting abortion services in Australia during the Covid-19 pandemic. You may have contacted us because you saw the recruitment materials on social media, or maybe a friend who participated in the study told you about it. We would like to speak with you about your experience trying to access abortion services, whether you ended up getting an abortion or not.

Source of funding

Funds for the payments to participants come from the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Primary Care (SPHERE).

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

If you agree to be contacted using email or text message, we will share the consent form with you before the interview begins. If you prefer not to be contacted by email or text message, we will verbally review the consent form with you before we begin the interview. For your convenience, you can choose to return a signed consent form in advance of the interview via email, or you can give verbal consent that will be audio recorded at the beginning of the interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decide not to answer any questions, and you have a right to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to explain yourself and without any implications. You can choose to withdraw your data from the study by notifying the research team that you would no longer like to include your information in the study – you can do this at anytime until the data are submitted for publication (usually 6 months to a year after the interview).

Possible benefits and risks to participants

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in the study. A potential benefit of participation in this study is having the opportunity to share and discuss your experience seeking abortion services. In terms of indirect benefits, you will be contributing information that will help us develop recommendations to increase access to abortion and other health care services in Australia.

It is possible that discussion of personal experiences can be distressing or a little embarrassing. Even though abortion is legal in Australia, there may be social risks if your abortion experiences are disclosed outside of the research team. We take your privacy and your wellbeing very seriously.

Services on offer if adversely affected

If you become upset or distressed because of your participation in the research, or if you need information about sexual and reproductive health, you can contact 1800MyOptions (1800 696 784), a free and anonymous hotline where you can ask questions about sexual and reproductive health services and get information about how to obtain counselling, support and services. They can provide referrals for online resources and services for people across Australia, or for in person services for people based in Victoria. You can also contact crisis counselling lines available throughout Australia, including:

- **Lifeline** provides 24-hour crisis counselling, support groups and suicide prevention services. Call 13 11 14, text on 0477 13 11 14 (12pm to midnight AEST) or chat online.

- **Beyond Blue** aims to increase awareness of depression and anxiety and reduce stigma. Call 1300 22 4636, 24 hours/7 days a week, chat online or email.

If you are interested in learning about other people's experiences with abortion services, you can access resources at I Had One Too (<https://ihadonetoo.com.au/about>).

Recognition of your time

At the end of the interview, you will receive a \$40 gift card in respectful recognition of your time and the emotional labour of volunteering to participate in this study. You will need to provide us with an email address to receive this gift card. You can choose between a Woolworths gift card (no expiration date, must be used in store) or Amazon gift card (expires within a year, for online purchases).

Confidentiality

Your privacy will be protected in a number of ways. First, we will not use your name, but only a special code number on all forms and computer files. Second, when you begin the interview we will check that you are in a private space where you can not be overheard. If you don't have a private space, we will reschedule the interview. Third, all forms and computer files will be stored securely. Finally, the raw data will not be made accessible in a data repository, registry or open source platform. Any information that we publish or share outside of the research team will not have your name attached to it. Redacted information (that is, information that is fully anonymised with no mention of your name or any other personal identifying information) may be shared with other researchers in ways that fully protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

Storage of data

We will store all information you give us very securely. Research data will be stored on secure Monash computers or drive in accordance with the requirements of the Monash University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. All confidential information (including audio recording, transcripts, consent forms, and contact details) will be uploaded online to a secured server, which is password-protected and can only be accessed by authorised personnel. Any email correspondence with participants regarding the consent form will be deleted immediately once the consent form has been uploaded. Any information downloaded from the Monash University server in electronic form will be stored on a password protected Monash University shared drive. Only approved research staff will have access to the data. Data will be retained at Monash University for seven years from the date of any publication arising from the data, and then destroyed in accordance with Monash University protocols.

Use of data for other purposes

The data may be used in the future by the approved research team to conduct further analysis related to the research aim described above. Only de-identified data may be used for other projects where ethics approval has been granted. That means your name and contact information will not be associated with any of the data.

Results

The results will be published in a policy brief, a peer-reviewed journal article, and a student thesis. Participants will be able to access the findings online. You can contact the research team to request any

publication available to date, and you can request that the research team notifies you when any publications or reports are available.

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Chancellery Building D,
26 Sports Walk, Clayton Campus
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Thank you,



Dr. Shelly Makleff