

IT'S NOT ABOUT ABORTION, IT'S ABOUT FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

In 2008 Section 8 of the Victorian Abortion Law Reform Act removed the right of doctors and nurses to practice according to their conscience, and in the best interests of their patients, by forcing them to participate in any abortion, regardless of the reason or the stage of pregnancy, or risk professional sanction.

A hard-working and well-respected GP from Sunshine is currently the subject of an investigation by AHPRA (the National Medical Board) for choosing not to refer a 19 week pregnancy for an abortion. In the absence of any patient complaint, AHPRA has charged him with breach of Section 8. His registration and his ability to practise medicine is now in jeopardy.

Earlier this year another GP from Melbourne's eastern suburbs was disciplined and threatened by AHPRA when he was reported to AHPRA by another doctor for expressing his personal views on abortion and Section 8 in a hypothetical and private discussion on a social media site. Following an interrogation by AHPRA, they judged him unprofessional on the grounds that he "confessed", to practising in accord with AHPRA's own national Code of Conduct but not Section 8 of the Victorian Abortion Law Reform Act.

The attached petition will be presented to Parliament calling for the amendment of Section 8 and for the right to conscientious objection to be supported in accord with our medical and nursing codes of ethics and conduct, including the codes of the AMA, the Australian Medical Council, the NHMRC, and the ANF.

We are hoping to get as many endorsements as possible from registered doctors and nurses. Petitions to Parliament require your name, signature, and a Victorian address. A work address is sufficient.

Please consider supporting this initiative that will hopefully help to amend the legislation.

For more information visit [www.doctorsconscience.org](http://www.doctorsconscience.org)

Please send all signed, original petition sheets by postal mail to:

**Hon. Christine Campbell MP 416A Bell Street Pascoe Vale 3044**

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Eamonn Mathieson  
*Convenor Doctors Conscience*



*"The Abortion Law Reform Act 2008 has predictably proven to be out of step with traditional values of freedom of expression and conscience in our advanced society, In particular it is inconsistent with international human rights instruments which protect rights of conscience. It is outrageous that dedicated doctors, including my ex-students, should be denied the right to practice free from coercion. It is important that Section 8 should be amended to allow doctors to practice according to their principles and conscience."*

*- Emeritus Professor John Murtagh*

# PETITION

## To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

### The petition of:

the undersigned registered medical practitioners and registered nurses of Victoria.

### Draws to the attention of the House:

our serious concern that Dr. Mark Hobart is being subjected to an investigation by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) because he chose not to refer a patient for an abortion. We believe that a health practitioner is never obliged to refer in relation to an intervention that the practitioner believes is medically unnecessary or ethically unacceptable.

We affirm the position statements of the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Nursing Federation, and the Australian Medical Council's Code of Conduct with respect to conscientious objection. We endorse AMA Victoria's support for legislative reform to "remove the requirement that a doctor with a conscientious objection must refer a patient seeking advice or treatment in relation to abortion to a doctor who they know does not have a similar objection."

### The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

Amends Clause 8 of the Victorian Abortion Law Reform Act (2008), as soon as possible, to remove any requirement that conscientious objectors (to abortion) must provide a referral.

|    | NAME (including title) | ADDRESS (Must be Victorian. Cannot be PO Box) | SIGNATURE |
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PLEASE NOTE: The names and addresses of people who sign this petition will be made available to the public if the petition is presented in the Legislative Assembly.