

From: [Phil](#)
To: [Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee](#)
Subject: Public Submission - Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018
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Phil Browne



Committee Secretary
Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence
Prevention Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Please accept this submission supporting the **Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018**.

I write as both a citizen and a health professional.

In preparing this submission I researched sections 224, 225 and 226 of the Queensland Criminal Code that relate to abortion. I was horrified by what I found. The legislation is so medieval and draconian. It was hard to believe what I was reading. I even had to check the date of the legislation. The Criminal Code Act is dated 1899 - one hundred and nineteen years ago. Society's attitudes have evolved greatly since then, but the law has not kept up. Disturbingly, the legislation reads as though it was written hundreds of years ago. I almost expected the Criminal Code to also say that women contemplating abortion must be burnt at the stake!

Why on earth is a health procedure listed as a criminal offence?

Why on earth can health professionals, other people, and even the woman having an abortion be sentenced to varying terms up to 14 years in jail?
I understand and am alarmed that even in cases of incest, rape, and diagnosed severe foetal abnormality, it is still a criminal offence to seek an abortion.

When I speak to Queenslanders, the majority are shocked to learn that abortion is still illegal - they assume this is not the case. When I discuss the incredibly severe penalties of jail terms that can apply, even to the woman herself, people are profoundly shocked.

If Queenslanders read the legislation, as I have done, I believe the vast majority would be offended that we treat people like this. Like myself, they would be in disbelief that the law is so extreme.

Even the title of the relevant chapter of the Criminal Code is disturbing - "*Chapter 22 - Offences Against Morality*".

I ask who's morality? I don't believe the majority of Queenslanders support the "morality" in this legislation.

The legislation is almost comical in that convictions can be recorded and jail time served by any person with "*intent to procure the miscarriage of a woman, whether she is or is not with child, ...*"

It's unbelievable that you can go to jail for up to 14 years for intending to procure an abortion on a woman who is not even pregnant!

It is embarrassing to be a Queenslanders with such awful legislation. Surely we are better than this!

I took an oath as a health professional to act in the best interest of my patients - and this includes acting as a patient advocate. I took this oath seriously and I can not remain silent when I see the current legislation harming patients.

The fact that abortion is a crime punishable by jail will force many people to seek other options, including highly dangerous self-abortions and backyard abortions. To make women feel pressured to have self-abortions and backyard abortions is shameful. These procedures carry inherent dangers, including death. What sort of society are we if women feel compelled to opt for risky procedures that put their lives at risk?

I have worked for many years as a Registered Nurse and many of my patients over the decades have contemplated abortions, for a range of reasons. All women contemplating or seeking an abortion should be treated with respect and compassion. I have seen some truly tragic circumstances leading up to the difficult decision to abort.

Like the overwhelming majority of my health professional colleagues, I have been comfortable and willing to assist these women and other members of the healthcare team caring for them. As a health professional it's my role to be there for these women in their time of need - it's not up to me to cast judgement on anyone. When surgical abortions were performed in the operating theatre staff were free to leave the theatre if they were not comfortable assisting. Not once did I see a shortage of health professionals happy to assist these women.

I support this bill to decriminalise abortion in Queensland.

Sincerely

Phil Browne
Registered Nurse

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"I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realised I was somebody": Lily Tomlin