



Australian College of Nursing

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT, TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL 2018

The Australian College of Nursing submission to the
Queensland Government (August 2018)

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

Email: health@parliament.qld.gov.au

RE: Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 (Queensland Government)

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the 'Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018' introduced by the Queensland Government, which will see terminations up to and beyond 22 weeks gestation become legalised in the state. Whilst legislation regarding termination of pregnancy varies across jurisdictions, ACN believes this is an important public health issue affecting the health and well-being of individual women, with additional flow on effects to the wider community.

ACN acknowledges that the topic of termination of pregnancy is contentious and divisive amongst the general population and the health professional community. ACN strongly advocates for the right to choice and equitable access to services for all women who are considering their options around termination of pregnancy. Poor access to termination services have demonstrated higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality. ¹ ACN has aligned its position on termination of pregnancy with recommendations outlined by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Specifically, ACN is supportive of the below recommendations: ²

- 'Recommendation 1: Access to termination of pregnancy should be on the basis of health care need and should not be limited by age, socioeconomic disadvantage, or geographic isolation.'
- 'Recommendation 2: A woman's physical, social, emotional and psychological needs should be taken into account in the course of decision-making, and pre- and post-termination counselling by appropriately qualified professionals be made available.'
- 'Recommendation 3: Health practitioners should be aware of the legislation regarding termination of pregnancy that applies in the jurisdiction in which they practice.'

ACN believes that prevention of unintentional pregnancy and improved health literacy, particularly around contraception and safe sex education, should be made a priority. More so, in the event of unintentional pregnancy, individuals considering termination should be provided with accurate information to make informed decisions. Women should be aware that termination of pregnancy is

¹ World Health Organization (2012). 'Unsafe abortion: global and regional estimates of incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality in 2000'. Accessed from: <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2004/9241591803.pdf>.

² The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (2016). 'Termination of Pregnancy'. Accessed from: [https://www.ranzcog.edu.au/RANZCOG_SITE/media/RANZCOG-MEDIA/Women%27s%20Health/Statement%20and%20guidelines/Clinical%20-%20Gynaecology/Termination-of-pregnancy-\(C-Gyn-17\)-Review-July-2016.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.ranzcog.edu.au/RANZCOG_SITE/media/RANZCOG-MEDIA/Women%27s%20Health/Statement%20and%20guidelines/Clinical%20-%20Gynaecology/Termination-of-pregnancy-(C-Gyn-17)-Review-July-2016.pdf?ext=.pdf)

generally safe and privacy/confidentiality is assured. Counselling by appropriately trained health professionals is essential prior to and following a termination.

ACN is aware that there will be health professionals strongly opposed to termination of pregnancy and they should not be expected to provide services against their personal beliefs. However, ACN believes all health professionals have a moral and ethical obligation/duty to inform women seeking termination of where and how services can be accessed without fear of judgement. More so, ACN strongly recommends uniformity and clarity of legislation across jurisdictions to benefit individuals and health professionals seeking and providing termination of pregnancy services, respectively.

ACN distributed the Queensland Government's 'Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018' to its membership within its jurisdiction. The majority of respondents agreed that terminations should be lawful on request up to 22 weeks; beyond 22 weeks with the agreement of 2 medical practitioners; and beyond 22 weeks in an emergency. In addition a majority agreed that health practitioners should be allowed to conscientiously object to the performance of a termination (excluding in emergencies); with the establishment of safe zones within 150m of the entrance of termination services; and with proposed offences for unqualified persons who perform or assists with a termination.

A summary of member feedback from 163 responses is provided below:

- Q1. Do you agree that terminations should be lawful on request up to 22 weeks?
 - 117 respondents answered YES (71.8%)
 - 41 respondents answered NO (25.2%)
 - 5 respondents were UNDECIDED (3.1%)
- Q2. Do you agree that terminations should be lawful beyond 22 weeks with the agreement of two medical practitioners?
 - 99 respondents answered YES (60.7%)
 - 48 respondents answered NO (29.4%)
 - 16 respondents were UNDECIDED (9.8%)
- Q3. Do you agree that terminations beyond 22 weeks should be allowed in an emergency?
 - 132 respondents answered YES (81.0%)
 - 19 respondents answered NO (11.7%)
 - 12 respondents were UNDECIDED (7.4%)
- Q4. Do you agree with allowing a health practitioner to conscientiously object to the performance of a termination, except in emergencies?
 - 107 respondents answered YES (65.6%)
 - 34 respondents answered NO (20.9%)
 - 21 respondents were UNDECIDED (12.9%)
 - 1 response was left unanswered
- Q5. Do you agree with the establishment of safe access zones within 150m of the entrance of termination service premises and associated penalties for prohibited conduct or restricted recording?
 - 135 respondents answered YES (82.8%)
 - 18 respondents answered NO (11.0%)
 - 10 respondents were UNDECIDED (6.1%)
- Q6. Do you agree with the proposed offences for unqualified persons who perform or assists with a termination?

- 135 respondents answered YES (82.8%)
- 8 respondents answered NO (4.9%)
- 20 respondents were UNDECIDED (12.3%)

For more information relating to each question, ACN will provide a summary of specific member comments upon request.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Carolyn Stapleton, Policy and Advocacy Manager at [REDACTED]

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K Ward". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light yellow rectangular background.

Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward
Chief Executive Officer
RN, MMgt, Dip App Sci (Nursing), Acute Care Cert, FACN, Wharton Fellow, MAICD

5 September 2018