



4 September 2018

Committee Secretary

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

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Dear Secretary,

### **Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018**

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Queensland Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 and specifically refers the committee to our previous submission into the *Review of termination of Pregnancy: Consultation paper*.

The APS is the national professional organisation for psychologists, with approximately 24,000 members across Australia. A key objective of the APS is to be responsive to community needs. This includes advocating for community wellbeing and psychological services and ensuring that ethical and professional standards are maintained.

All APS psychologists are bound by their Code of Ethics and related Ethical Guidelines. The Guidelines make it clear that a psychologist should recognise a woman's right to development as an autonomous and psychologically healthy person, and recognise and support a woman's capacity to define her own problems.

The APS therefore welcomes this Bill and the proposals to remove abortion from the Criminal Code in Queensland. In particular, and in line with psychological best practice, we support the five underlying principles of the Bill, that:

- abortion should generally be treated as a health matter
- women's autonomy and health should be promoted
- Queensland laws should align with contemporary international human rights obligations

- Queensland laws should be consistent with contemporary clinical practice, and
- Queensland laws should be broadly consistent with other Australian jurisdictions that have modernised their abortion laws.

The APS is confident that the consultation process prior to the drafting of the Bill has taken into account matters contained in our original submission, specifically:

- that termination of a pregnancy is a medical procedure and that as such, like the provision of any medical health service, provision of termination services should comply with professional, ethical, legal and best practice Australian standards. Hence, qualified and registered medical doctors would perform terminations and registered nurses would assist in performing terminations.
- that any practitioner with a conscientious objection must tell women of their conscientious objection and refer the woman to a practitioner who does not hold such an objection.
- that a decision to seek counselling should always be a matter of individual choice. Pregnancy counselling, information and support services should be readily available to women in urban and rural areas, but making counselling mandatory would be disrespectful to the many women who are already well informed and clear in their intentions. A range of free or low-cost counselling options is already available to those who wish to use them. The provision of evidence-based information, support and the option of further counselling is standard ethical and professional best practice in all health consultations.
- that the provision of legislated safe access zones is crucial to ensure safe, timely access to termination of a pregnancy. Safe access zones ensure that women will not be shamed, intimidated, frightened or obstructed when accessing a health clinic of their choosing.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these important proposals. The APS would be happy to provide further comment about these issues specifically, or for further information please contact me directly on [REDACTED]

Kind regards



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Executive Manager Professional Practice