

From: [Women's House](#)
To: [Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee](#)
Subject: Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018
Date: Wednesday, 5 September 2018 9:55:01 AM

To Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee;

Please find below a submission from Women's House Shelta, located at 15 Morrisey Street Woolloongabba 4102 (phone 07 3391 0005). The submission has been approved by the Women's House Shelta Collective.

Women's House Shelta has provided refuge and support to women and children escaping domestic violence for over forty years.

We support the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018, which will decriminalise safe terminations practices and provide easier access to safe abortions to women.

While we believe that access to legal, safe and affordable abortion is essential to **every** woman's right to control over her own body and life, this submission aims to highlight issues for women affected by domestic violence.

It is our experience that Queensland's current laws impede the provision of safe and accessible abortions. Further, they disproportionately impact and damage women who are affected by domestic violence and hinder their ability to leave violent partners and establish lives free from violence.

Domestic violence refuge work involves very close and ongoing contact with women over a period of time, which gives refuge workers a unique understanding of domestic violence, and particularly the difficulties or barriers that women face as they endeavour to leave a violent relationships. Domestic violence is not a series of one off violent incidents, but rather it reflects a sustained pattern of controlling behaviour and coercion. Men who perpetrate domestic violence can be highly manipulative and persistent and the tactics they use to establish and maintain power and control over their partner are many and varied. One such tactic used by perpetrators is to exert control over a woman's reproductive freedom.

Over the last forty years many women who have accessed Women's House Shelta have told us how their partner has deliberately denied them access to birth control and forced or coerced them to have sex so that they fall pregnant and are trapped in the relationship. A perpetrator will use his partner's pregnancy as a means of controlling her. Once she is pregnant her ability to work is reduced at the same time as the financial demands on her income increase. Women with children may need a larger home, sufficient money to feed, clothe and pay for childcare. Single mothers may struggle to maintain a home and care for the children. Even if a woman is subsequently able to leave the relationship, she may be forced to remain in contact with the perpetrator in order to negotiate care of the children and Child Support arrangements, and to remain in his vicinity, in compliance with Family Law orders for child contact.

We particularly welcome abortion law reform which will decriminalise abortion and provide equity of access to abortion, therefore removing a barrier to leaving a violent partner for women who have experienced reproductive coercion within the context of domestic and family violence.

Yours sincerely,

The Women's House Shelta Collective