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

5 September 2018

To the Committee Secretary,

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global service provider and leading advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. We welcome the opportunity to provide input on the Queensland Government's Inquiry into the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 ('the Bill').

IPPF supports the passage of the Bill in its current form. As enshrined in Article 12 of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* ('CEDAW'), to which Australia is a state party, access to sexual and reproductive health services is a fundamental right that serves to empower women and further gender equality.

Every individual has the right to reproductive freedom. IPPF works to ensure women and girls have the right to decide whether to continue a pregnancy through the provision of safe, legal, and accessible termination of pregnancy services.

The criminalisation of termination of pregnancy diminishes both the rights and health of women and girls. In contexts where legal termination of pregnancy is unavailable, unsafe termination of pregnancy occurs at significantly higher rates, leading to poor health outcomes and substantial social and financial costs. As recommended by the CEDAW Committee in 1999, parties to the Convention should remove punitive laws directed towards women who undergo terminations<sup>1</sup>, as such measures drastically undermine the health and wellbeing of women and girls. Numerous other United Nations committees have also called for the decriminalisation of termination of pregnancy including the UN Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee against Torture, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Women in Queensland who choose to discontinue a pregnancy should be free to make this choice without the risk of ill-health, death, or fear of stigma, shame and persecution. Currently, Queensland is one of only two jurisdictions in Australia where terminations continue to be criminalised, with the other jurisdiction – New South Wales – having broader exemptions available to women. The introduction of this Bill would align Queensland legislation to be comparable to other Australian state jurisdictions such as Victoria.

IPPF strongly supports the provision of safe and legal termination of pregnancy in Queensland through this Bill. IPPF emphasises particular support for the following provisions of the Bill:

- S 5 – availability of termination upon request during the first 22 weeks of pregnancy;

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- S 14 – the establishment of safe access zones; and
- S 8(3) – the imposition of a statutory duty obligating conscientiously objecting medical practitioners to refer a patient seeking termination of pregnancy.

The above provisions will enable women residing in Queensland access to safe, legal termination of pregnancy services. If approved, this Bill will ensure far greater reproductive autonomy for women in Queensland and lead to improved health and wellbeing.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Sincerely,

Johanna Wicks



Chief, IPPF Australia and New Zealand Office

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<sup>i</sup> CEDAW. 1999. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24: Article 12 of the Convention (Women and Health)*. [REDACTED]

