



Archbishop of Sydney

3 September 2018

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

Via Email: health@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir or Madam

I write to express my deep concern about the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 (the Bill) which has been introduced into the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The Bill represents a fundamental revision of the framework which is seeing the liberalisation of criminal termination laws. I respectfully suggest that not all trends are worthy of following. At the centre of this revision is a preferencing of patient autonomy at the expense of an unborn life. While I am a resident of NSW, I thought the Bill before the Queensland Parliament was of such seriousness and significance that it affects all Australians, and not just those citizens resident in the State of Queensland. I recognise that the matter is a State issue, yet any ill treatment of a human being, even in utero, should be a concern of all Australians.

Conceptually, I can see two related yet distinct issues with the narrative of abortion as exemplified by the Bill. First, I am concerned that neither the Bill nor the Explanatory Notes makes mention of the need to consider defending the unborn child's right to life. In her speech introducing the Bill, the Hon Yvette D'ath mentioned 'foetus' only once and that was in the context of the 'interests of the foetus hav[ing] increasing weight' after 22 weeks gestation. The issue is that this issue of aborting foetuses is two-sided, there are the considerations of the mother, and there are the considerations of the unborn child. The former has been given exclusive prominence, the latter cursory, if any, consideration. As a society this approach enables us to dehumanise human foetuses.

This leads to the second point, having dehumanised foetuses, they are not even mentioned in the Bill nor the Explanatory Notes. The Bill prescribes the terms under which the act to terminate the life of an unborn child may happen lawfully and yet does not mention the very existence of the unborn child or foetus. The act (namely, abortion) is described, but the person upon whom the act is done (viz., the unborn child) is erased from the narrative of the Bill. This is a sad reflection of the level of abstraction required to normalise the act of terminating an unborn child's life.

I wish to mention briefly two further issues in respect to the specifics of the Bill.

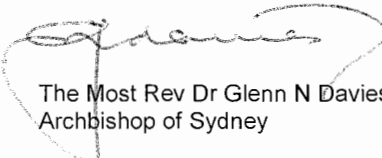
First, the Bill is drafted in a manner which ensures that all health practitioners, whether conscientious objectors or not, are complicit in the act of the termination. Part 2 Clause 8 forces a conscientious objector to direct a woman seeking a termination to a medical practitioner who holds no such objections. Health practitioners with conscientious objections should not be legally compelled to make such recommendations. The Bill is effectively compelling them to assist in the abortion, against their conscience.

Second, Part 4 of the Bill proposes safe access zones of 150m from clinics where terminations are performed. There is an absence of substantial evidence for the need of such zones. Further, such zones are undemocratic. They impinge on freedom of speech, association and religious belief. In this context, the rights of everyday Australians have not been considered. The police have sufficient powers to detain any who are disrupting the peace or harassing clients wishing to use the services of such clinics.

I believe that the Bill should not be supported and I would encourage a clear and transparent review of the rights of, and the impact on, the unborn child coupled with a reflection on what it means for a society to neglect to defend the rights of its most vulnerable citizens.

With every good wish

Yours sincerely



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Archbishop of Sydney

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