

3 September 2018

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To whom it may concern

I am writing this submission regarding the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018.

It is a mystery to me that this Bill has been tabled to Parliament despite the YouGov Galaxy Poll undertaken in February 2018 which showed that the majority of Queenslanders disagree with its contents, specifically:

1. 60% of Queenslanders oppose **mid-term abortions** which is past 13 weeks.
2. 73% of Queenslanders disagree with **late-term abortions** (past 23 weeks).
3. 85% of people polled opposed **sex-selective abortion**.

With those statistics in mind let's look at the Bill:

- **Mid-term abortions – between 13 and 22 weeks. The Bill allows for abortion up until 22 weeks for any reason.** Part 2, section 5 of the Bill allows termination of a pregnancy up to 22 weeks on demand.
 - **Problems:**
 - A baby's heart starts to beat at around 6 weeks' gestation. This would indicate a *living being separate* from the mother, who has her *own* heart and her *own* heartbeat.
 - From the moment of fertilisation a baby is a *complete* human being, requiring only the correct environment in order to mature enough to live separately from the mother. No other part of the mother can make this claim. The baby is a *separate person* from the mother.
 - At 10 weeks, the baby has all his/her vital organs in place and beginning to function, including kidneys, intestines, brain, and liver. All that is needed is the right environment for that little life to grow and develop.
 - At 12 weeks, a baby can close and open their fingers, curl their toes, clench his/her eyes, and his/her mouth will make sucking movements. The Baby Center website states that at 12 weeks: "His face looks unquestionably human: His eyes have moved from the sides to the front of his head, and his ears are right where they should be." How can a baby who is unquestionably human be 'terminated' for any reason, something perhaps so simple as "I want to finish my degree and get married before I start having children".

- **Late-term abortions – past 23 weeks.** The Bill allows for abortion up to birth, for any reason. Part 2, section 6 allows it after 22 weeks as long as two medical practitioners sign off.

- **Problems:**

- Babies born at 24 weeks are viable and can survive outside the womb. Killing a baby outside the womb at that stage of development is illegal. How then, can ‘terminating’ a baby who is 24 weeks *inside* the womb then be legal?

Wouldn't a better solution be to deliver the unwanted premature baby alive, and give it up for adoption to the hundreds of couples who desperately yearn for a baby of their own?

The adoption statistics for Australia are appalling, and more so for Queensland. The document “Adoptions Australia 2016 17” published by the Australian Government’s Australian Institute of Health and Welfare states there were only 5 children adopted in 2016/2017 in Queensland (local adoption, i.e. not known to the adoptive parents – step children etc. – and not international adoptions).

For some reason, I found it hard to source information on exactly how long the waiting list is for adoptive parents, however considering that the waiting and processing times are into the years it is most likely extremely long. I have had relatives go through the gruelling process only to be told years into it that they were ‘not suitable’ – the reason given that ‘in a time of difficulty, you seem to pull apart, instead of pulling together’. **Considering how few children are available for adoption, it seems any reason to cut prospective parents from the list might be used, no matter how irrelevant and ridiculous.**

- According to the Queensland Government’s department of Births Deaths and Marriages, a baby’s birth must be registered even if stillborn if the gestational period is over 20 weeks. How then, if it is considered a baby or person at 20 weeks (and thereby the requirement to be registered), can it then be ‘terminated’ for any reason while still inside the womb? This seems contradictory. Is it a person or not? And if so, should it have the same rights as a baby outside the womb? Its location should not matter.

- **Sex-selective abortion.** The Bill provides for abortion for any reason to birth.

- **Problems:**

- It is well known that in some cultures, boys are more preferable to girls. Therese Hesketh and Zhu Wei Xing write in their article entitled “Abnormal sex ratios in human populations: Causes and consequences” published in the scientific journal “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America” (PNAS):

“In the absence of manipulation, both the sex ratio at birth and the population sex ratio are remarkably constant in human

populations. Small alterations do occur naturally; for example, a small excess of male births has been reported to occur during and after war. The tradition of son preference, however, has distorted these natural sex ratios in large parts of Asia and North Africa. This son preference is manifest in sex selective abortion and in discrimination in care practices for girls, both of which lead to higher female mortality. Differential gender mortality has been a documented problem for decades and led to reports in the early 1990s of 100 million “missing women” across the developing world. Since that time, improved health care and conditions for women have resulted in reductions in female mortality, but these advances have now been offset by a huge increase in the use of sex selective abortion, which became available in the mid 1980s. Largely as a result of this practice, there are now an estimated 80 million missing females in India and China alone. The large cohorts of “surplus” males now reaching adulthood are predominantly of low socioeconomic class, and concerns have been expressed that their lack of marriageability, and consequent marginalization in society, may lead to antisocial behavior and violence, threatening societal stability and security. Measures to reduce sex selection must include strict enforcement of existing legislation, the ensuring of equal rights for women, and public awareness campaigns about the dangers of gender imbalance.”

Allowing abortion for any reason, on demand gives the green light to anyone who wants to choose the gender of their children. This will naturally increase the practice of sex selection and therefore the number of abortions of perfectly normal babies.

For the above reasons, I urge you to consider the rights of the unborn when considering this Bill. This Bill is not good for babies, nor is it good for women. According to Health Research Funding, women who have had abortions are three times more likely to commit suicide than women of childbearing age who have not had abortions. They are 81% more likely to have mental health issues than other women. Teens who have had abortions are ten times more likely to attempt suicide than teens who have not had an abortion. To put that in perspective, eighteen percent of abortions in the U.S. are teenagers—that’s almost one fifth of all abortions in the country.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Yours faithfully

Sharon Gee