

Submission to Health Committee - Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018

The Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018, if passed, will inevitably increase the number of abortions in Queensland. The Bill evidently allows abortion on demand up to 22 weeks, and allows abortions after 22 weeks for something as vague as *social circumstances*. What doctor will refuse if a person says they can't afford to have a baby? This shows a complete disregard for the value of human life, and should not even be contemplated in a civilised society. The termination of a pregnancy is the taking of a life. I have a personal friend who gave birth to a baby boy at 27 weeks. The baby is now five months old, a beautiful little boy, most certainly a real person.

A YouGov Galaxy poll in August 2018, showed that only 6% of Queenslanders support abortion after 23 weeks, with 76% opposed. According to a similar poll, 62% of Queenslanders consider that an unborn at 23 weeks is a person with rights. It is the role of government to protect life not destroy it. This Bill ignores the fundamental human rights of the most defenceless members of the human family to protection by government.

It is very disturbing that this Bill effectively allows sex selection abortion. History tells us that in societies where infanticide has prevailed, it is the girls that are more likely to be killed. Why would it be any different in sex-selection abortion? This is nothing less than gender discrimination. A YouGov Galaxy poll in August 2018 indicates that only 8% of Queenslanders support sex-selective abortion, with 83% opposed.

Since only 6% of Queenslanders support late-term abortion and only 8% of Queenslanders support sex-selective abortion, why is the Government proposing such harmful legislation? It does not have the support of the broad stream of the community.

The Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 is quite unnecessary, as abortion in Queensland is relatively accessible now, with around 14,000 occurring each year. However, the existing Queensland legislation does send the message that the intentional killing of human life is a serious moral issue. Any legislation which tends to lower our society's estimate of the value of human life must have a detrimental effect in the long term. The existing laws remind us that when an abortion takes place a life is destroyed and a woman is often harmed, sometimes for life.

The requirement in the proposed Bill that a doctor with a conscientious objection *must refer the woman, or transfer her care, ... to another registered health practitioner who, in the first practitioner's belief, can provide the requested service and does not have a conscientious objection* is a violation of a person's right to conscientious objection and effectively makes the first practitioner complicit in the outcome. It is most likely that some skilled doctors, who contribute much to our community, will leave their profession. This in turn could lead to a shortage of doctors, especially in rural and regional areas. A health practitioner who has a conscientious objection should not be obliged to refer or direct a woman to another practitioner or to a termination of pregnancy service. This would be for the woman to pursue herself if she chooses to do so. This provision in the Bill is a kind of totalitarianism that stomps over a person's conscience; it is a limiting of the freedom essential for the welfare of a happy and well-ordered society.

Also of concern is the fact that the provisions of this Bill are so broad that abortions may be performed at taxpayer-funded public hospitals. The availability of free abortions at public hospitals would inevitably lead to an increase in the abortion rate, with more women being harmed as a result. It would also put more stress on an already overcrowded public health system.

The proposed Bill does nothing to help protect vulnerable women from coercion into having an abortion. It would only make abusive partners bolder in forcing their women to abort their babies, especially if abortions are free at public hospitals. The domestic violence problem we already have will likely increase.

The absence of any provision to provide free independent counselling before a decision is made to have an abortion is a serious concern. The whole thrust of Part 4 of the proposed Bill seems to be to keep women in ignorance. There is certainly no concern to save life. A woman considering an abortion should have full information on the development of the unborn child, the nature of the procedure and the physical and psychological risks associated with an abortion. She should also be made aware of the support available if she decides not to have an abortion. This Bill shows contempt for the right of a pregnant woman to know all the facts before making a final decision on an abortion.

This Bill all but ignores the most important and fundamental issue – the termination of a pregnancy is the taking of a life. I am strongly opposed to it.

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