

**Subject:**

SUBMISSION re the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018

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SUBMISSION regarding the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018

I am an undecided voter, and the voting record on this bill will certainly inform my vote at the next election.

It seems remarkable to me that in the Twenty First Century we are discussing liberalising laws against abortion. There are many facets to this conversation, many nuances and contexts, feelings and experiences which can make it difficult and complicated to find any meeting of the minds. What I've observed is that all these arguments must ignore the immutable fact that central to this whole debate is not the rights to self-determination or bodily autonomy of one person, but two.

Pro-abortion campaigners must ignore a galaxy of scientific evidence & expert testimony that human life is present from the moment of conception to offer obviously facile slogans such as "woman's body, woman's choice." The only alternative is that, while acknowledging that there is indeed a second living human affected by decisions to terminate a pregnancy for whom the outcome is almost invariably fatal, they must subsequently diminish the value of that life to be less than equal value to any other human life.

There is no other way to interpret arguments such as the circumstances of conception having any bearing on the options of whether to uphold or trample fundamental human rights when considering how to treat a person. If a child conceived in rape cannot be "terminated" when three years old, how could those circumstances justify termination when the child is at an early, pre birth stage of development? It is only by diminishing the inherent value of a class of human lives because of attributes common to their class but distinct from others - their stage of development.

Once upon a time it was argued that people with black skin weren't actually equal to people with white skin, and their subordinate class of humanity entitled the superior class to treat black people as property; chattels to be acquired and disposed of at their master's choice. Once upon a time it was seriously suggested that people with Jewish identity were sub-human and therefore not entitled to fundamental human rights such as equality before the law or even the right to the precious gift of life. Advances in technology and subsequently science enabled maturing societies to scoff at these ridiculously callous and hateful claims. Societies also advanced and we drew upon our Christian consciences to abolish the global slave trade and to promise that "Never again!" would we commit or look away while genocide was committed in our name as a mature and principled society.

In 1899 the people of Queensland had reached the stage of social maturity where we knew that to deliberately take the life of an unborn child was an act of unconscionable evil to be avoided in every circumstance possible. This natural law was one merely recognised and codified by our government, not created or sustained by popularity, but their moral imperative. It did not take the wonders of ultrasounds or keyhole surgery in utero to understand that each human life had intrinsic worth and dignity long before the ever reducing line of viability.

Following World War II the world recognised the capacity for even medical professionals to radically disfigure their ethics to justify the horrific in the name of "progress". One

attempted solution took the form of updating the Hippocratic Oath in the Declaration of Geneva (1948). Doctors, clarifying the original principle to "*do no harm*" further swore to "*maintain the utmost respect for human life, from the time of conception; even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity.*" The attempt has already failed though. Sadly, the specific reference to the time of conception has grown unfashionable as doctors once again forgot the need for an objective standard beyond our destructive tinkering.

Unencumbered by this ethical relativism, scientific evidence exists for the objectively indisputable fact of the beginning of human life than ever before.

- "*By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception.*"
- Dr. Hymie Gordon (Chairman of the Department of Genetics at the world-renowned Mayo Clinic)
- "*At no time is the human being a blob of protoplasm. As far as your nature is concerned I see no difference between the early person that you were at conception and the late person which you are now. You were and are a human being.*"
- Dr. Jerome Lejeune (the father of modern genetics)
- "*The exact moment of the beginning of personhood and of the human body is at the moment of conception.*"
- Dr. McCarthy de Mere (medical doctor and law professor at the University of Tennessee)

No, it's not 1899 anymore. In addition to advances in science and bio ethics, we have far more concern for discriminating against whole classes of people based solely on attributes beyond their control - such as their age or stage of development - and have become champions of human rights. Article 3 in the The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." The unborn baby is unquestionably human and automatically entitled to human rights.

Disturbingly revealing of the callous disregard for human rights by those framing these laws is the denial of pain relief during termination for fetuses that would ordinarily be given pain relief if undergoing surgery at the same stage of development. Such barbarism is far beneath the standards of 1899 bio ethics and human compassion.

Why then do we even begin to entertain notions that would be easily condemned if those human beings were at a later stage of development? They are not trespassers, but even a stowaway's right to life is not invalidated by their unwelcome presence on a ship out at sea. The vessel's captain has a duty of care until such time as that human life can be removed without mortal danger. They did not desperately disrespect their mother's borders, but sovereign nations must treat sacred even the lives of illegal refugees. Likewise mothers have a duty of care to their unborn children until such time choices which do not invariably harm the child. Pre-born people are living human beings with inalienable human rights. Without the right to life, there is no right to bodily autonomy, suffrage or equal pay.

In 120 years not one single woman has been charged let alone criminalised under extant laws because she had an abortion. Abortion in Queensland is widely accessed and heavily subsidised, and is only harder to access where all maternity services have been defunded and centralised.

There is no demonstrable need for Queensland's abortion laws to be changed, unless it were to demand independent counselling. If serious about women's healthcare and empowerment we must ensure there is no coercion from a violent partner or sexual assault

perpetrator. We must be consistent if invoking "choice" and offer women genuine alternatives such as offers of pregnancy support.

Any legislation liberalising abortion must not concurrently increase authoritarianism by compelling doctors to refer to doctors who will perform what their conscience forbids, or by declaring certain speech prohibited within any proximity of an abortion facility.

I implore the Qld Parliament to reject this third recent attempt at liberalising abortion and to maintain the uneasy tension of the status quo. If change is needed, it is only in the area of extra protection for women, extra funding for genuinely independent counselling, and promotion of the patently inadequate local adoption options.

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