

My name is Mrs Denise Musgrave

I am opposed to the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 (The TOP Bill) proposed by the Palaszczuk Government. I believe this whole Bill is seriously flawed, but due to time restraints to prepare my submission, I will limit my critique to only 2 parts of the Bill.

1 The TOP Bill allows for termination of a pregnancy to 22 weeks by a doctor without any considerations required. (Part 2, s5) and after 22 weeks until birth with considerations which are nebulous and not clearly defined. Acceptable circumstances could include sex selection (Part 2, s6).

In a recent independent survey conducted by YouGov Galaxy between 6-8<sup>th</sup> August 2018, (with a representative sample of 1,000 voters, both men and women, distributed throughout Queensland, including Brisbane, regional and rural areas) showed the majority were against abortions. The survey results showed:

*60% would not allow abortion after 13 weeks (including 21% who did not agree with abortion at all)*

At 5 weeks a tiny heart begins to beat, by 8 weeks brain activity can be detected, by 13 weeks the unborn bay can make complex facial expressions, by 22 weeks the unborn baby may be able to experience pain during an abortion.

*76% oppose abortion after 23 weeks,*

A baby has a reasonable chance of survival outside the womb.

*Only 6% support abortion to full term, that is 94% OPPOSE abortion to full term.*

2 The TOP Bill says nothing about informed consent, a critical consideration.

### 3 Personal Anecdotes

- I. At age 15, I discovered I was pregnant to my 22 year old boyfriend. I was terrified to tell my parents because my father had threatened to charge my boyfriend with carnal knowledge if our relationship became intimate. I had no-one to talk to ... so I tried to pretend it wasn't happening. At 4 months pregnant, I couldn't pretend to myself any longer so I confided in a girlfriend who found out some information for me on terminating the pregnancy. The information was that I was too far along to have an abortion. (I am so thankful for that!!!)  
When my parents found out, there was talk about me going to a girls' home where young women could go to wait for their babies and then they would leave them there to be adopted. But they said they couldn't do that to their flesh and blood. My boyfriend and I really loved each other, so by then I was 16 and they agreed for us to be married.  
A few months later, I gave birth to a beautiful healthy baby boy, who has been a joy and delight to me all his life. He is now 51 and I look back on his life, his beautiful wife and their 4 beautiful daughters, his contribution to society and to his fellowman; I am so proud of him, and I am so thankful that I did not have an abortion. I am so thankful that I was prevented, by law, from having him terminated, from stopping this beautiful human being from being born.

It can be a shock when a pregnancy isn't planned, but I believe with support from family and friends or an independent counselling service if no family is available, initial fears and vulnerabilities can be overcome and the woman supported into motherhood.

II. I experienced this again when one of my daughter's best friends became pregnant at 17. My daughter told me she was going to have an abortion. I visited the anxious young woman and we talked about her options and consequences of each option. She chose to have the baby and her mother fully supported her.

When she had the baby, she wrote to me, sending photos of her baby daughter and thanking me for helping her to see the way forward for her with a baby. She said having her daughter was the best thing she ever did.

III. When there is no support or counselling for a pregnant woman, pre or post termination, there can be lifelong consequences.

Another personal example: when I was at a ladies retreat, the conversation somehow touched on traumatic experiences we may have experienced and their long term consequences. In a room of about 20 women, over the course of 2 hours, 5 middle aged women each got up and with tears and deep remorse told how they had aborted their babies 30 plus years ago. They told of the heart wrenching decisions that they made, how there were no services or counselling available to them before they made the decision or after the abortion and how that grief had never left them, that even after all these years, they felt like a piece of them was missing.

Although a woman may believe that she will not experience any psychological effects from having terminated her pregnancy that is not to say that at a later date she will experience grief and remorse. This is especially true for women who have not been able to have counselling and been presented with all her options.

*The YouGov Galaxy survey demonstrated that there is strong widespread support in Queensland (88%) for women to receive independent counselling so that she make a fully informed decision. In fact 91% of females and 85% of males take this view.*

*The overwhelming majority of Queensland voters (85%) also support the idea that a woman considering abortion should receive information on the development of the unborn child, the nature of the procedure, the physical and psychological risks associated with abortion and the support available should she wish to continue her pregnancy.*

3 I find it difficult to marry that a Government would seek to make it legal to terminate a baby's life after 23 weeks for social or other reasons, when a baby can be born at 23 weeks and survive. Thousands of dollars are currently spent by this government giving that prematurely born 23 week old infant every chance to live, yet at 23 weeks, another baby can have its life terminated because it is an inconvenience, or the wrong sex.

*An unborn child at 23 weeks is a person with rights and 62% of people surveyed agree. 62% of those surveyed oppose abortion past 22 weeks for social reasons and 83% oppose Sex-selective abortion.*

Unfortunately time does not allow me to address other parts of the Bill.

However, the results from the recent YouGov Galaxy survey demonstrate that the majority of voters in Queensland do not support the Palaszczuk's Governments far reaching Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018.

I will conclude by saying, that as a voter, I feel so strongly about this issue, that if my Member of Parliament were to vote for this Bill, I will not vote for him at the next election.

Members of the Health Committee, I urge you to vote down the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018.

Yours sincerely  
Mrs Denise Musgrave  
4/9/18