

James Walker



Health Committee

Tuesday, 4 September 2018

RE: Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018

Dear Leaders and Decision makers,

I am concerned, as a member of the public, about recent news of a bill attempting to change abortion laws in Queensland.

I am concerned because Labor's Termination of Pregnancy Bill would appear to effectively allow *abortion to birth, for any reason*. Tragically, the person-hood of the unborn child is not accounted for in this legislation.

As far as I understand, Labor's Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 would mean:

1. Abortion on demand up to 22 weeks for any reason, including sex-selection abortion.
2. Abortion past 22 weeks gestation until birth, even for social reasons, if two doctors approve, although the second doctor is not required to assess the patient.
3. Complete prohibition on any communication against abortion within 150 metres of clinics, effectively criminalising any advocacy for the unborn child or a balanced presentation of alternative options (eg. keeping the child, help from immediate or extended family, adoption).
4. Doctors with conscientious objections **must** refer a woman seeking an abortion to another doctor who will be able to facilitate her request, thus making the referring doctor potentially a criminal if he advises against abortion on psychological grounds by offering an alternative referral against the will of the mother.
5. There are no safeguards for women seeking an abortion, such as a full and balanced informed consent, cooling-off periods or mandatory independent, qualified counselling.
6. Removing most provisions about abortion from the Criminal Code without adequate balanced protection for the unborn child devalues human life and in my opinion, goes too far the other way as to prevent open discussion. This law amounts to endorsing summary execution of an unborn child,

removing the legal and ethical protection of a proper and professionally trained, **balanced** discussion being required beforehand. It effectively encourages on demand, indiscriminate abortion. This is absurd in the light of other medical procedures requiring informed, balanced discussion of options and alternatives. Medical practitioners are to “first do no harm” yet this bill effectively forces doctors to either, directly or indirectly endorse summary abortions according to the mother’s will at that moment. This is no longer a medical practitioner but a technician who performs what they are told (or is forced to find someone who will) without reasonable assessment and proper discussion.

Furthermore, media articles putting forward emotive arguments based on exceptional cases (such as pregnancy after rape) to justify general (“free for all”) abortion is not logical. Exceptional cases must be treated as exceptions. If one pursues this highly emotional and sensitive line of argument, then consider current law which does not allow for summary execution of a rapist (nor a convicted rapist after fair trial) no matter how great the public outcry, yet this bill proposes the summary execution of unborn babies. Babies who have not yet even had a chance to break any laws and goes further by prohibiting any (even civil) public objection to it within 150 metres.

Please seek to stop this proposed bill to deregulate abortion to the point where the unborn have virtually no legal rights or value in Queensland. It also does not consider the long term effect of abortion on the mother. If a woman has become pregnant without considering her choice (excluding exceptional cases), is it then sensible for her to be given abortion at will without proper, full and unbiased council of all the options and full consideration of the long term effects of abortion on her welfare, including psychological? Is this kind of legislative change helpful? Or is it simply swinging the pendulum too far?

The law reform commission seems to be proposing to “handball” termination of pregnancy from the province of the legal profession to the health profession while at the same time making legislation which effectively forces doctors, directly or indirectly to expedite, promote and facilitate abortion. What does it say about how the Queensland Law Reform Commission in 2018 values the life of an unborn child compared to the original law makers over a hundred years ago? Will the unborn child be considered to have less value because we have a ‘quick, quiet and out of sight way’ to dispose of them? Are we to have those who might speak up for the unborn (who have literally no voice), to be further silenced by Queensland law?

Please consider these points & reject the proposed abortion bill which in our opinion goes too far.

Yours sincerely,

James and Jodie Walker