

Submission to: Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

My name is Lyndall Daniel. As a constituent in the electorate of Kurwongbah, I write to you with a heavy heart about the proposed changes to abortion law in Queensland in the form of the 'Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018'.

I am extremely concerned about the dramatic changes proposed, and the impact these will have on unborn children and women undergoing abortions.

Among my concerns are:

- Allowing **abortion on demand up to 22 weeks for any reason.**
- Allowing **abortion past 22 weeks' gestation until birth, under a wide range of criteria including "social" reasons.** Although a second doctor's consent is required, the second doctor will not even have to see the woman, or look at her medical record or file – and there is no legal penalty if the abortion is performed without a second doctor's approval.
- **Sex-selection abortion would be legal,** so unborn female babies can be killed simply for being a girl, or being the same gender as other children that a person may already have, if they 'wanted' a child of the opposite gender
- **There are no safeguards for women seeking an abortion,** such as independent counselling, informed consent conditions and cooling-off periods. These are particularly important for women who are being coerced into having an abortion.
- **No effective conscientious objection for doctors.** Doctors with conscientious objections would have to refer a woman seeking an abortion to another doctor who will be able to facilitate her request, thus making the referring doctor complicit in the outcome.

The Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 is unnecessary, as abortion in Queensland is quite accessible, with sadly 14,000 occurring each year (sadly, that's more than one classroom of children aborted every day!). There is no need to decriminalise abortion, as, according to Cherish Life Queensland, "...NO woman has ever been convicted for having an abortion in Queensland. Abortion remaining in the Criminal Code does serve as a necessary deterrent to doctors and as a moral compass for all. It instructs society about the grave consequence of an abortion – a life is destroyed and a woman is harmed."

Abortion shouldn't be seen as the primary way to treat women with an unexpected or unwanted pregnancy. A range of studies have revealed that up to 20% of women who have had an abortion suffer serious, prolonged psychological trauma after an abortion. Abortion is correlated with substantially increased risks of depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug use and suicidal behaviours.

Instead, if changes are made to the abortion laws in Queensland, they should include the introduction of safeguards for women accessing abortion services such as:

- informed consent so that the mother has as much information as possible about the process and the risks associated.
- cooling off periods in non-emergency circumstances so the mother can change her mind if she so chooses without undue pressure, and
- access to free independent counselling that allows the mother to understand the full implications of the decision, the physical and emotional toll an abortion can have, as well as access to information about support available and alternatives such as adoption.

The current laws surrounding abortion allow women to have abortions for legitimate reasons in the Queensland public health system. I believe the circumstances of those abortions should only be in the case of rape, incest or serious, life threatening danger to the mother.

Another concern I have is that doctors, particularly in rural and remote communities, may be forced to conduct abortions even if they personally object to them. Please imagine that you are a doctor who is opposed to abortion because of a religious belief, or other personal reasons – a person who has chosen the medical profession to save and improve lives... imagine then the mental impact for this doctor who is forced to perform an abortion against their will – a procedure that they view as murder, taking the life of an unborn child? The grief and guilt this doctor could experience could impact them for years and possibly cause them to leave the profession. I ask you to campaign for this part of the proposal to be removed. I fear for the rights of doctors who oppose abortion, and wonder about the impact this change would have on rural and remote medical services. This change alone could severely reduce the number of doctors willing to serve in rural and remote communities for fear of having to perform abortions against their will. It is already difficult enough to attract doctors to some of these communities – please remove this provision before it becomes another barrier.

Many Queenslanders share my concerns. I urge you to please take seriously the concerns documented titled 'What Queenslanders really think of abortion', which is the executive summary of a report on a comprehensive independent market research survey conducted by YouGov Galaxy Research, commissioned by the Australian Family Association and Abortion Rethink*. This online opinion poll of a representative sample of 1,001 Queensland voters was conducted from 6 to 8 February 2018.

Life is so very precious, and I implore you to take a stand for unborn children who don't have a voice.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

Lyndall Daniel

References:

*Poll executive summary is available at:

