

**TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL 2018 ENQUIRY SUBMISSION**

Submission by Candice Schmidt

**I do not agree that terminations should be lawful on request up to 22 weeks:**

The current law and its outworking are sufficient. My understanding is current practice in Queensland allows abortion up and to 14 weeks of pregnancy with Medical abortions currently taking place up till 24 weeks. There has been no prosecution of doctors or women and 14000 abortions took place last year alone.

Most woman realise they are pregnant at around 6 weeks – that means they currently have 6-8 weeks to decide to keep or abort. Science shows life begins at conception, the heart beats around 21 days after conception and brain waves are detected around 6 weeks. From 12 weeks the fetus/baby is fully formed including finger prints. It may be little but it is fully human, fully alive and those having an ultrasound around 12 weeks and posting their ultrasound pics on social media show a tiny human beautiful baby. This growing fetus/baby is a separate body, often with its own different blood type and it has its own DNA. This is a tiny human that is separate to its mother, and an abortion ends its life.

I am prolife however recognise our culture requires an abortion option. Abortions in the first trimester are less traumatic on the woman's body (the doctor has to scrape the placenta away from the wall of the uterus which is not ready to come away), and while the unborn fetus/baby is killed, it happens quickly with minimal suffering.

Allowing abortion on demand up to 22 weeks is not good for the woman or the fetus/baby. The baby is much bigger and harder to kill and get out and there is evidence that the fetus/baby suffers pain and trauma before death. There are also physical effects of removing a larger baby and placenta from the womb of the woman with more physical complications and trauma.

I am a counsellor and also run grief and loss courses for the White Butterfly Project which supports those who have suffered perinatal loss – through miscarriage, stillbirth or abortion. I have sat with multiple individuals and groups of woman, many in tears, who regret their abortion. They carry guilt and shame knowing they ended their unborn baby's life. I never judge and care, support and help them to process to heal and move forward, but I witness first hand the pain, the struggle and mental health effects of those who have had abortions. Even those who felt they had no choice feel the loss and remember their little one. We have woman who come to our reflection service every year to remember that little one. It is a painful experience for many, and while they may feel relief immediately after an abortion, in the weeks, months or years after they can struggle to come to terms with their decision.

There is well documented psychological effects on a woman as there is a bonding and connection that happens when carrying child in pregnancy and they feel the loss and the trauma after an abortion. Woman who have had an abortion are much more likely to suffer depression and some are even suicidal. It also affects bonding with future pregnancies.

Allowing abortion on demand to 22 weeks is not good for woman and obviously is taking the life of a healthy baby.

Many woman who would consider terminating are struggling with fear or current life circumstances. These woman should be offered more support and choices. Relationship counselling, referrals to agencies that offer financial and other support, Domestic Violence support in cases of partner coercion etc. Allowing abortion till 22 weeks will also result in many healthy babies being aborted for sex selection which is tragic and wrong.

People who want choice need to be offered options in contraception to prevent conception. They currently have choice for unplanned pregnancy to abort in the first trimester. If they continue the pregnancy into the second trimester then they need support not abortion. Our culture needs to shift its focus back towards adoption. There are many childless couples desperate to love a baby. With the push for changes in surrogacy laws, adoption of babies would be a much better option. Open adoptions keep babies connected to their biological roots without the biological parents carrying the burden of raising the child.

**I do not agree terminations should be lawful beyond 22 weeks with the agreement of 2 medical practitioners:**

It would be easy to find 2 doctors to agree to termination, especially when they can benefit financially from the procedure. This clause effectively legalises abortion till birth which is an horrendous thought. It is a fact that doctors in hospital currently terminate babies who have health issues or where the mum's life is in danger. This clause is so broad for "future psychological, physical and social circumstances" – If a woman and her partner break up and she wants to end the pregnancy, she will be able to. If she is worried about finances, or has to move and has no where to live could all be valid reasons for termination. We are saying the life of the baby has no value except if it is wanted.

This law would effectively kill viable healthy babies. My husband is a neonatal doctor. They save babies lives born at 22 and older weeks. This law would allow viable, healthy babies to be killed with a sad story or excuse. This is barbaric. Again these woman need support, counselling and adoption should be recommended, not abortion.

**Lawful terminations – more than 22 weeks pregnant and in an emergency:**

This is most likely not necessary. Current practice is the baby is delivered vaginally or by c-section if needed to save the mum's life. A baby at 22 weeks or above has a chance of surviving outside the womb in the NICU. The mother and baby's life can be protected.

**Conscientious objection:**

Doctors and nurses and staff should be allowed to conscientiously object and should not be required to make a referral. For example, a doctor sees a couple who wants to terminate their pregnancy as the child is a girl but they want a boy. They doctor knows this a healthy baby and does not want this life ended for social reasons. By being forced to refer the doctor will know that child's life is going to be ended and they have had a part in that. That doctor goes home and on his conscience knows he facilitated the death of a healthy viable baby. That should not be their responsibility.

Queensland health could offer a free healthline and have a website with information that woman can ring to get support and also find abortion providers. If a woman wants to pursue abortion she can get that information herself by phone or google.

**I do not agree to the establishment of safe access zones within 150 m to entrance of termination service premises:**

People who are near these clinics are trying to offer woman information and choices. The government should be pro informed consent. There can be conduct protocols required but people offering counselling, pamphlets and support should be allowed. In America, there is an organisation called "Save the Storks". They have a van near an abortion clinic that invites woman to chat and view an ultrasound for free. Many woman who find out options, find support in counselling and financial provision, and see the baby's heartbeat and ultrasound, change their mind. If society is "pro choice" it should be pro informed choice. This is a big decision for a woman as a baby's life is at stake and she should be given appropriate information and consider alternatives so as not to regret her decision later. The government should offer pro life and pro choice services on site and require a woman have a consultation before termination.

In this consult – coercion by partner or family should be ruled out and if coercion an issue, support offered, not abortion.

A free ultrasound should be offered.

Information about the abortion procedure and risks and side effects – physically, hormonally and mental/psychological effects given. When a woman's body has prepared for pregnancy and the pregnancy is forced to end, there are effects of the procedure (some woman can face infertility issues, ectopic pregnancies etc from scarring.). There are also hormonal effects that take a while to settle and there is definitely an emotional effect as the woman feels the loss at an emotional level.

Post abortion counselling services and information should be offered to support woman after their abortion.

**Offences for unqualified persons:**

There should be 7 year sentences for unlawful abortions. More if there is negligence that has caused harm to the woman, including if abortion provided by a registered practitioner.

**Other issues:**

I hope the parliamentary committee realises the weight they carry in deciding on these laws. I believe the current laws do not need changing, there is sufficient provision of abortion services and medical reasons are covered. What is needed is more counselling and support and adoption offered as an alternative.

The Labour government and Jackie Trad are promoting an extreme bill that will result in many healthy babies being killed for social reasons up until birth. It is extreme and hard to fathom they believe abortion this is ok.

If these new law proposals go ahead, those who have agreed to the terms are complicit in the death of these babies as you have the power to say no and save the lives of babies and also protect the mental and physical health of woman.

Please consider the life of the unborn and rather than liberalising abortion, address the relational break down, the other struggles that woman face thinking abortion is the only

option when it doesn't need to be. Woman and their babies need our support to sustain the life they carry. Please protect and value all life including the unborn by voting against these proposals.

Prime Minister John Howard supported families with the baby bonus – recognising that we as a society need to have a birth rate that is replacing the current population to provide a tax base for the future to cover elderly pensions. We need a government who is prolife, pro family and pro informed choices providing more finances to support mental health of families through relationship counselling.

**I am happy for my submission to be published.**

**I am willing to appear as a witness at a public hearing.**