

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee](#)
Subject: Re Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018 - Wayne Shipton 35 Wattlebird Crt Currumbin Valley
Date: Wednesday, 5 September 2018 8:50:26 AM

Dear Qld Health Committee,

I am writing because of my deep concerns regarding the proposed Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018. I currently work as an anaesthetist for Qld Health and this bill, if it is successful, will have a direct impact on those working at my hospital who do not agree with the proposed change in law.

I have multiple concerns that I want to raise in order to petition you that this bill is not passed, at least in its current form. I understand that this is a delicate and complicated issue with competing human rights issues between mother and child, and I don't claim to be rigidly opposed to termination in all circumstances. I understand that there are times when termination may be necessary for the physical or psychological well being of the mother, or because of fetal abnormalities that are not compatible with life, however this bill will allow for terminations at any stage of development, and to be performed for almost any reason as long as 2 doctors are on board. There needs to be more of a balance between making terminations safe and accessible, but at the same time ensuring that are only used when there is an immediate threat to the mothers life, and that they are a last resort after all alternative options have been explored. It is our duty to protect the most innocent in our society, especially those without a voice to protest. An unborn child, whether 22 weeks old or not, is a human being in my view and the view of many, and has all the same indelible human rights that anyone of us should be entitled to. At 22 weeks, when a child is born prematurely, everything is done medically, with no expense being spared, to save that child's life. The qualification for the right to life should not be based on the age of an individual, or whether he/she can survive unassisted without medical or other support, nor whether she is wanted by her mother or able to care for it. A healthy, full term child also requires constant support to survive initially. Prescribing rights in this way is a dangerous path for our society to tread down. I believe the community understands that a fetus, no matter the age, is a human being. For eg in a recent criminal case on the Gold Coast the judge handed down 2 life sentences to a man who killed his girlfriend and their unborn 10 week old fetus. One for the woman, and one for the fetus. A person also has a right to choose what happens to their body, but does this right trump the right to life? I think the answer is no. Our society recognises this truth in many other circumstance. We are able to choose for ourselves up to the point of it affecting or injuring others. For example, we are compelled to wear seat belts in cars and will be fined without one. Why can't we choose what happens to our body in this instance? - because of the risk, especially of an unrestrained driver injuring others, and also because of the associated additional medical costs to the community that would be involved. Choice cannot trump another's life.

I believe the proposed bill is completely one-sided, and wholly inadequate, in that it appears to be interested only in making termination exceedingly accessible, while ignoring the duty to protect the rights of the unborn child, or to protect those health workers with a conscientious objection. As an anaesthetist I do not feel comfortable in assisting in terminations except for exceptional circumstances, and this bill does little to protect me from making that decision, but instead insists on complicity. It also fails to ensure a rigorous and thorough assessment by the involved health workers, or to ensure that proper informed consent is adhered to. For terminations after 22 weeks the second doctor performing the assessment is not even required to physically meet with the mother. I believe the process needs to be more rigorous, with perhaps a mandatory waiting period in order to have time to consider the alternatives, and to be adequately informed of the risks/benefits of each option.

As a doctor we take an oath to help save life, and to first do no harm. I urge you to help repeal this bill, or to make significant changes to it, so that we can help protect those without a voice, and those health workers with objections to it.

Kind Regards,

Dr Wayne Shipton

