

From: [REDACTED]
To: [abortionlawreform](#); [Brisbane Electorate Office](#)
Subject: Submission: Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016
Date: Tuesday, 21 June 2016 7:56:38 PM

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Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee
Queensland Parliament.

Please accept this submission regarding the [Abortion Law Reform \(Women's Right to Choose\) Amendment Bill 2016 and Inquiry into laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland.](#)

I write as both a citizen and a health professional.

In preparing this submission I researched sections 224, 225 and 226 of the Queensland Criminal Code that relate to abortion. I was horrified by what I found. The legislation is so medieval and draconian. It was hard to believe what I was reading. I even had to check the date of the legislation. The Criminal Code Act is dated 1899, though I suspect it has been amended in the one hundred and seventeen years since then?? Disturbingly, the legislation reads as though it was written hundreds of years ago. I almost expected the Criminal Code to also say that women accessing abortion had to be burnt at the stake too.

Why on earth is a health procedure listed as a criminal offence?

Why on earth can health professionals, other people, and even the woman having an abortion be sentenced to varying terms up to 14 years in jail?

I understand and am alarmed that even in cases of incest, rape, and diagnosed severe foetal abnormality, it is still a criminal offence to seek an abortion.

When I speak to Queenslanders, the majority are shocked to learn that abortion is still illegal - they assume this is not the case. When I discuss the incredibly severe penalties of jail terms that can apply, even to the woman herself, people are profoundly shocked.

If Queenslanders read the legislation, as I have done, I believe the vast majority would be offended that we treat people like this. Like myself, they would be in disbelief that the law is so extreme.

Even the title of the relevant chapter of the Criminal Code is disturbing - "Chapter 22 - Offences Against Morality".

I ask who's morality? I don't believe the majority of Queenslanders support the "morality" in this legislation.

The legislation is almost comical in that convictions can be recorded and jail time served any person with "*intent to procure the miscarriage of a woman, whether she is or is not with child, ...*"

It's unbelievable that you can go to jail for up to 14 years for intending to procure an abortion on a woman who is not even pregnant!

It is embarrassing to be a Queenslanders with such awful legislation. Surely we are better than this!

I also support making it illegal for people to be within a buffer zone of at least 150 metres, to harass or interfere with women accessing health facilities where abortions may be performed. At least one other state (Victoria)

has legislated for this. I suggest this should be added to future revisions of this legislation, if not possible to include this now.

I have worked for many years as a Registered Nurse and many of my patients over the years have accessed abortions, for a range of reasons. Having worked in interstate as well as Queensland hospitals, I'm alarmed by the drastically reduced number of abortions performed in Queensland public hospitals compared to interstate. Surely the number of women seeking abortions must be the same - so why is there this massive reduction in Queensland, and more importantly where are these women accessing their abortions (is it as safe as a hospital)?

I can only assume that Queensland abortion law is largely to blame for the huge reduction in Queensland public hospital abortions compared to interstate.

I took an oath as a health professional to act in the best interest of my patients - and this includes acting as a patient advocate. I took this oath seriously and I can not remain silent when I see this legislation harming patients. To make patients feel pressured to have self-abortions and backyard abortions is shameful. These procedures carry inherent dangers, including death. What sort of society are we if women feel compelled to opt for risky procedures that put their lives at risk?

All women considering abortion should be treated with respect and compassion. I have seen some truly tragic circumstances leading up to the difficult decision to abort. Like a great many of my health professional colleagues, I have been totally comfortable and willing to assist these women and other members of the team of health professionals caring for them. As a health professional it is my role to be there for these women in their time of need - it's not up to me to cast judgement on anyone. When surgical abortions were performed in the operating theatre staff were free to leave the theatre if they were not comfortable assisting. Not once did I see a shortage of health professionals happy to assist these women.

I support this bill to decriminalise abortion in Queensland.

Sincerely

Phil Browne
Registered Nurse

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"I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realised I was somebody": Lily Tomlin

