

From: [REDACTED]  
To: [abortionlawreform](#)  
Subject: Abortion Reform Bill- individual submission  
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FAO the Research Director  
Please see below my personal submission to the enquiry  
Submission to the  
Parliamentary Committee for  
Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence  
Prevention to assist in their Inquiry into Abortion Law Reform in Qld

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26th June 2016

The Committee of Inquiry into Abortion Law Reform  
Health, Communities, Disability Services and  
Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

Dear Committee Members

I am writing to seek your endorsement in favour of the repeal of the current laws existing around abortion in Qld ie codes 224, 225 and 226 and to subsequently decriminalise abortion in Queensland, in line with similar law reform in other Australian states and territories.

I have been a registered nurse and midwife for 33 years and have worked in a number of settings in the United Kingdom and Queensland. In my professional and personal life I have supported many women who have accessed abortion services. No woman takes this decision lightly. I recall the absolute distress of women traveling from Southern Ireland where it was impossible to access abortion services to the inner city hospital I worked in in Manchester -desperate to access a legal abortion – they were prepared to risk their lives – and sadly as we know many women still do. Since 2005 I have worked in tertiary, rural and remote hospitals across Queensland and I was shocked when I discovered the current legal situation covering abortion in the state. I believe that the repeal of the current laws in Queensland will take some of the additional stress away from those women seeking to access services and provide equity of service access- enabling women to access safe care.

I understand that this is an emotive issue, but I also understand the deep distress experienced by many women who cannot access services because of lack of finance, support or the inability to travel.

Although it is well established that unwanted pregnancies occur in women of all ethnicities and social classes, the women most disadvantaged by the current laws are

the most vulnerable. It is wrong to maintain a system that will widen the current gap making the disadvantaged worse off. No body wins – the unwanted children will be born to disadvantaged mothers – often ending up in the care of the state – going on to become vulnerable young women themselves and so the cycle will continue.

Access to abortion services for Queensland women should not be dependent on the personal values / beliefs of the doctor the woman presents to, or to how much money or other resources she has. Regardless of where she lives, each woman should have access to sympathetic services providers who can give her non biased information so she can make an informed decision on what is best for her.

I understand that the topic of abortion is an emotive issue and I do respect the right of some individuals to disagree with abortion – however one group of individuals should not have the right of veto over another person making an informed choice about their body. This is particularly relevant when considering access to services within publicly funded facilities. No other aspect of health care (and yes this is health care !) is subject to such veto by non affected individuals.

I am aware that there has been some media hype re the absence of a gestational age limitation but I believe this has been adequately explained as a necessity to repeal the current law. It is highly unlikely that women will be requesting abortion services at late gestation - I ask the committee therefore when making their decision to consider the far more common scenario (supported by evidence) that the vast majority of women present early in pregnancy because they choose, for whatever reason that it is not in their best interests to continue the pregnancy.

I would urge you therefore to consider the current inequity within the State and country and support the call to repeal the current laws

Mary Sidebotham  
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