

Submission to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee (formerly the Health and Ambulance Services Committee) on Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016 and Inquiry into laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland

The proposed *Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right To Choose Bill) 2016* states that there is a need for reform because the current law is causing great hardship and personal suffering. This proposed Bill was also introduced because the current law and its provisions are seen to be, "archaic, outdated and have no place in a modern, liberal democracy." ¹

When did morality and the sanctity for human life become outdated? The abortion laws as they stand now are located in Schedule 1 The Criminal Code, Part 4 Acts injurious to the public in general, Chapter 22 Offences against morality.²

The taking of human life is morally wrong in the eyes of God whom through all things were created, under the law and as a society.

It is illogical to suggest that because we are now in the 21st century that a human foetus which has been considered a human life for all history is no longer so. Medical and scientific advancement is now such that we know more about conception through to birth than at any other point in history.

On this point Randy Alcorn in his article *Scientists Attest To Life Beginning At Conception* quotes scientists and experts from the United States Senate Judiciary Subcommittee in 1981.

The following is an extract from his article.³

A United States Senate Judiciary Subcommittee invited experts to testify on the question of when life begins. All of the quotes from the following experts come directly from the official government record of their testimony.

Dr. Alfred M. Bongioanni, professor of pediatrics and obstetrics at the University of Pennsylvania, stated:

"I have learned from my earliest medical education that human life begins at the time of conception.... I submit that human life is present throughout this entire sequence from conception to adulthood and that any interruption at any point throughout this time constitutes a termination of human life....

I am no more prepared to say that these early stages [of development in the womb] represent an incomplete human being than I would be to say that the child prior to the dramatic effects of puberty...is not a human being. This is human life at every stage."

Dr. Jerome LeJeune, professor of genetics at the University of Descartes in Paris, was the discoverer of the chromosome pattern of Down syndrome. Dr. LeJeune testified to the Judiciary Subcommittee, "after fertilization has taken place a new human being has come into being." He stated that this "is no longer a matter of taste or opinion," and "not a metaphysical contention, it is plain experimental evidence." He added, "Each individual has a very neat beginning, at conception."

Professor Hymie Gordon, Mayo Clinic: "By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception."

Professor Micheline Matthews-Roth, Harvard University Medical School: "It is incorrect to say that biological data cannot be decisive.... It is scientifically correct to say that an individual human life begins at conception.... Our laws, one function of which is to help preserve the lives of our people, should be based on accurate scientific data."

Dr. Watson A. Bowes, University of Colorado Medical School: "The beginning of a single human life is from a biological point of view a simple and straightforward matter—the beginning is conception. This straightforward biological fact should not be distorted to serve sociological, political, or economic goals."

Everything in this proposed bill assumes that the foetus is not human when this is not the case. Changes to the law on abortion regarding the sanctity of life now imply a person's choice is greater than the right to life of the unborn child that she is carrying. This is morally wrong.

In his book *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options*, Norman L. Geisler says in response to the position concerning the autonomous rights of the mother and her consent to sex that, *"This position wrongly assumes that only the mother's rights are in view. True, a mother has the right to control her own body under normal circumstances. But when she is carrying another human being within her body, there is a conflict of two rights: the baby's right to live conflicting with the mother's right to control her own body. And the right to life takes precedent over the right to control one's own body...Further, it is true that one has a right to evacuate an intruding adult from taking residence in one's home and attaching self to one's refrigerator. However, if one drops a newly born baby on one's doorstep, it would be a crime of negligent homicide to toss the baby into the garage to die! But this is precisely what abortion does. Certainly the baby has intruded into the mother's body. Truly this can be an unwanted inconvenience. Likewise, it will involve the baby feeding off the mother for nine months. But none of these are moral grounds for expelling a human baby to certain death because of these inconveniences."*⁴

He goes on to say about a woman's right to privacy. *"First, we do not have the right to privately kill human beings... Second, abortion of human beings is significantly different from evicting someone from our home. Abortion is more like killing an indigent person in our home because that person will not leave. After all, evicting a nonviable embryo is fatal. It is tantamount to killing it, since it cannot live on its own outside the womb. Third, with the exception of criminal rape, no pregnancy is unwilled. If one consents to intercourse, then one is responsible for the result of that free act. So, to carry the illustration through, in 99 percent of abortions the "guest" was invited to begin with. This being the case, abortion is more like inviting indigent guests to our home and then killing them (or evicting them to a sure death) simply because they are not wanted."*⁵

The Explanatory Notes to the *Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016* says in the section on the benefits of the Bill that,

*"Many people do not even know that abortion still sits in the Criminal Code until they need to make a decision about it. There seems to be a real disconnect between what the law is, what people think it says and what people believe it should be."*⁶

If people are unaware of the laws a greater awareness is needed. Sex education has been in schools for years. All sex education should be teaching that sexual intercourse has the potential to cause pregnancy. At this point the legal rights and responsibilities should also be being explained clearly.

Rather than legalising abortion as a quick fix, invest in appropriate counselling for pregnant women who are considering aborting their child. A minimum of three sessions over a number of weeks, discussing what is happening with their body, what is their situation and home life and why they think abortion is their best solution and the consequences that this decision may and will have. Many of the women that go through with an abortion suffer with emotional and mental pain afterwards. On the Emily's voice website it has many statistics on abortion and the detrimental effects it has on women says;

The majority of women and girls who have abortions do so because of a lack of support from partners, parents and friends. 70% of women say they felt they had no alternative to abortion.

Abortion not only ends the life of a child (the foetal heartbeat is detected at 22 days from conception), but often leaves a woman and others deeply wounded, affecting existing and future relationships.

One comprehensive study of 400 international studies into the psychological risks associated with abortion concluded that 20-30% of women who had an abortion suffered from serious, prolonged, negative consequences.⁷

If people are unaware of the law, how are they any more likely to be informed about their decision to abort their child? Make adoption of unwanted children an option. Instead of decriminalising, what is at the least manslaughter of the unborn, seek ways to help them and their child to both have some quality of life. Doctors should always have the right not to perform an abortion.

The proposed Bill may protect the vulnerable Queensland women and the doctors that are currently risking prosecution to assist them. However, it ignores the rights and needs of the unborn child. The repealing of the laws to do with abortion is exchanging the right to life with the right to choose who is allowed live. In its most simplistic form, it is legalising discrimination. It is hardly an embarrassment for Queensland to be among the last states to still be protecting lives of the unborn, rather it should be a credit to us, that we stand where others gave in to the easy option to silence the ones without a voice. The role of the law makers is not to give the people what they want but to legislate what is in the best interest of society. It is never in society's best interest to kill the unwanted or undesirables.

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Notes and Reference Materials.

- [1] Queensland Parliament Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee (2016) *Explanatory Notes to the Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016* [Online] Available: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/HCDSDFVPC/inquiries/current-inquiries/AbortionLR-WRC-AB2016>
- [2] Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) (May 2016) *Part 4 Chapter 22* [Online] Available: <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/legisln/current/c/crimincode.pdf>
- [3] R. Alcorn and National Association for the Advancement of Preborn Children (2010) *Why Life Begins At Conception: Scientists Attest To Life Beginning At Conception* [Online] Available: <http://naapc.org/why-life-begins-at-conception/>
- [4] N. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010, p.138.
- [5] N. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010, p.139.
- [6] Queensland Parliament Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee (2016) *Explanatory Notes to the Abortion Law Reform (Women's Right to Choose) Amendment Bill 2016* [Online] Available: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/HCDSDFVPC/inquiries/current-inquiries/AbortionLR-WRC-AB2016>
- [7] Emily's Voice (2016) *Emily's Voice: Get Informed- Abortion Facts* [Online] Available: <https://www.emilysvoice.com/get-informed/abortion-facts/>